

Name THE *Title*
JEWISH SPY:

Name I. BEING A *Title*
PHILOSOPHICAL, HISTORICAL and
CRITICAL Correspondence,

By LETTERS

Which lately pass'd between certain
J E W S in *Turkey, Italy, France, &c.*

Translated from the ORIGINALS into French,

By the MARQUIS D'ARGENS,
And now done into English.

In FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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БИБЛІОТЕКА ІМЕНІ А.С. ПАСТЕРНАКА

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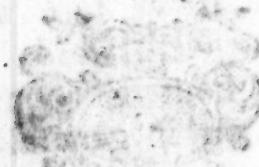
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R A B B I E S

OF THE

SYNAGOGUE at Amsterdam.

GENTLEMEN,

I AM fully conscious of my rashness in presuming to offer you so defective a translation as this must appear to you, who so perfectly understand the Hebrew language, and are so well acquainted with its beauties. But in consideration of my zeal and good-will, I hope you will pardon all its faults. Such as it is I make bold to present it to you, being, encourag'd, however, by this one consideration, viz. that I dedicate it to you gratis, without expectation of any reward; knowing, that what costs nothing is always very well receiv'd, especially by the Israelites.

It would, therefore, be a kind of injustice in you, to censure a book which will, from henceforward, make you known throughout Europe. 'Tis true that your nation in general is not so covetous of praise, as of pelf. But after all, since there happen to be three such honest men of it, as the writers of these letters, 'tis not morally impossible but there may be a fourth in it, and I dare say, many more.

DEDICATION

They who imagine that a man cannot be a Jew without being a little knavish; and that Israelites, Usurers and Robbers are synonymous terms, carry the point too far: For 'tis no rash judgment to pronounce, that there are in the world, perhaps ten Jesuits that are humble, ten Gascons that are modest, ten Italian prelates that are men of learning, ten English ones that are good christians, ten Venetians that are devout, ten Spaniards that are not superstitious, and ten Sicilian prelates that can read: Why then may there not be ten such Jews as AARON MONCECA, JACOB BRITO and ISAAC ONIS?

If your nation is not so virtuous in general as some others, it has, however, had its able men, and its great men, as well as those.

Glad that I can do more justice than they who judge of it with so much prejudice and partiality, I am very sincerely,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most humble, and

most obedient servant,

The Translator of the
LETTRES JUIVES.

TO THE EDITOR
Valiant and Magnanimous
Don QUIXOTE
De la MANCHA,

Invincible Knight of the LIONS,

&c. &c. &c.

I Llustrious hero of Cervantes, not to be parallel'd for the destruction of sheep and puppets, courageous and intrepid assailant of wind-mills, and fulling-mills, perpetual terror of the catchpoles of the holy brotherhood *, &c. &c. permit me to put under your powerful protection this volume of the Lettres Juives. A certain crack-brain'd knight, to the full as mad and as extravagant as yourself, hath resolv'd upon their ruin; and vow'd their destruction. In vain does the publick think to save them from his fury. He offers battle to the whole universe,

* La Santa Hermandad, as it is called in the original, is a brotherhood of long standing in Spain, where it was first instituted in a time of very great confusion, to suppress robbers: By which means 'tis safe travelling in this country, the fraternity being spread all over the kingdom. Their beadle's or serjeants to apprehend such offenders are called Alguazils.

DEDICATION.

and boasts that he will reduce them to atoms, maugre the protection of all enchanters. In this extreme distress permit me to fly to you for succour; come, oh! wrong-headed knight, oppose folly to folly: Humble your rival, the insolent knight of Iberia; and after laying him flat on the ground, compel him to confess that he has no title to the privilege of being so extravagant as you. Considering how long he has pretended to vye with you for the sceptre or bawble of Momus, your jealousy might justly be inflam'd at his impertinence and folly; yet you still suffer him to enjoy his reputation in peace. But consider that glory calls you forth to battle, and that even your profession demands you should exert yourself. You are bound by the laws of knight-errantry to redress grievances, to comfort the afflicted, and to protect the oppressed. You cannot therefore in justice refuse the Lettres Juives that generous assistance which I earnestly implore for them; and in the just confidence I have of obtaining from you this favour, I remain with the profoundest respect,

INCOMPARABLE KNIGHT,

Your most humble, and most

Obedient Servant,

LAM

S. A.

M. D.

THE
JEWISH SPY.

LETTER CVI.

Character of the Spanish nobility and gentry.—The excessive pride of the grandees.—Ridiculous story of Valenzuela, a slave to a Spanish duke, promoted to the grandeeship.—The chagrin of the grandees thereupon.—Valenzuela strip'd of his dignities and disgrac'd.—Disputes between the grandees and the monks.—Ministers and negotiators employ'd by the court of Spain, very liable to censure and abuse.—Some instances to prove this assertion.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Madrid—

In my former letters I gave thee an account of the common-people, and the Friars: In this I shall endeavour to give thee an idea of the nobility and gentry. The nobility of this country in general, look upon laziness as a part of their privileges. A mere nobleman in Spain is a temperate man; a fine quality, sure, if it was not occasion'd by poverty or sloth! He is proud, serious and ignorant, excessively fond of his own dear person, and of his country, despising all others, but doing so much honour to the French as to hate them. He seldom turns his mind to arms, but spends his time in his town,

town, or his village, without any thing to do but to read old romances, the works of St. Therefa, or some other visionary of the like kind; in short, he is the most obsequious humble servant of the monks, and a slave to the women from his birth. So much for the Spanish nobleman*.

The grandes of Spain are still more proud and haughty than the mere nobility. They contended formerly with their sovereign. But Philip V. who was born in France, assum'd the same authority over the Spanish nobility as the kings of France have over the French; and the grandes of Spain are as submissive now as the other nobility; tho' some were so very insolent in the reign of Charles II. the predecessor of the present king, that when two comedies were play'd at court, by way of rejoicing for his recovery from a fit of sickness, and every body without exception was forbid to come upon the stage, the duke of Ossuna plac'd himself there on a heap of cushions, and would not stir, tho' he was appriz'd of the king's orders.

Notwithstanding the vanity of the grandes of Spain, and the haughty airs which they gave themselves in the last reign, they met with several mortifications; but the greatest of all was that which they receiv'd by the promotion of one Valenzuela to the grandeeship. This Valenzuela had been page to the duke de l'Infantado, by whose death he was left

* Seneca, when he said that none but beasts could glory in their sloth, gave a useful lesson to the Spaniards: Happy for them if they could improve by it! Gloriari otio iners ambitio est: Animalia quædam, ne inveniri possint, vestigia circa cibile ipsum confundunt. Idem tibi faciendum est: Seneca Epist. LXVIII. This irony, how sharp soever it is, fits the Spaniards admirably well. For as he spends the day in reading romances, the night in playing on the guitar, lurking in his village, without doing any good to his king or his country, he wants nothing to preserve that tranquility and that sluggish life of which he is so fond, but the means of concealing his retirement from the eyes of such as might turn him out of it. He must therefore imitate, those animals which encompas their residence with every thing that is capable to conceal it.

without a protector, and so poor that he became paſſante et corte, i. e. was forc'd to live by his wits. By the assistance of a monk he made a ſhift to get a ſmall place at court; and being a handsome man, with a good genius, he refolv'd to improve his talents. He made an acquaintance with Donna Eugenia, a German lady, who poſſeſſ'd the queen's confidence. He pleas'd her at leaſt as much as ſhe pleas'd him, and ſhe permitted him to galeantear her, which is the uſual term apply'd to ſuch as attach themſelves to the ſervice of the court-ladies. Gallantries of this fort are ſo common that we often ſee marry'd men, who make no ſcruple to wait upon their maſtresses publickly. Donna Eugenia was not inſenſible of her lover's regard for her, and ſhe rewarded him by the gift of her hand in marriage. Fortune who was refolv'd to advance Valenzuela, did not ſtop her fauours to him there; but procur'd him the friendſhip of the queen regent, who led him from one employmēnt to another till ſhe advanc'd him to the firſt dignity in the kingdom, by making him a grandee of Spain of the firſt clas, with the double key.

This news was a terrible ſhock to the Spanish noblemen whose vanity was thereby ſo mortify'd that they had not courage to complain of the affront it put upon them. They star'd at one another, but had not a word to ſay more, than Valenzuela es Grande! O Tempora! O Mores! One of them was ſo ſtung with the ſcandal he thought it was to the grandees, that he refolv'd to fee the face of the ſun no more, ſince it had been ſo impertinent as to ſhine upon ſuch a baſe deed. This don, when he heard the fatal news, took to his bed, in which after he had tumbled and toſſ'd ten years together, he dy'd. His ſervants entering that morning into his appartement, and his valet-de-chambre opening the window, he ask'd him gravely, Que-haſe il Tiempo? i. e. What time of day is it? The domestic having return'd an answer to this firſt question, the next that he ask'd him was, whether his butcher was made a grandee of Spain; Mi Carnizero es Grande? No my lord,

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said he. Well then, shut the window, said the don. The comedy was then over for that day, but it was acted again the next and so on till his death ; and nothing could ever reconcile him either to the sun or mankind.

The fortune of Valenzuela, which was the cause of this nobleman's distraction, was ruin'd with as much rapidity as it was establish'd. The queen, who protected him having receiv'd an order from king Charles II. to retire to a convent at Toledo, her favourite was sent to Chili in the Philipine Islands, after being stripp'd of all his offices, and taken by force from a church to which he fled for refuge. He supported his disgrace with very great constancy ; and when he was told that the king had taken all his posts from him, and left him nothing to bear but his title, "I perceive then, said he, very coolly, that I am much more unhappy than when I first came to court, and the duke de l'Infantado made me his page."

Mean time tho' the ruin of Valenzuela seem'd to be a satisfaction, with a vengeance, for the affront put upon the grandees of Spain, it was the cause of their receiving a fresh mortification. The Roman pontiff, being inform'd that the chief noblemen themselves had taken Valenzuela by violence from his sanctuary, excommunicated all that had a hand in that affair ; and they could not be releas'd from the Roman censures, till, like the vilest of malefactors, they went in their shirts with halters about their necks to the imperial college ; where Mellini, the Pope's nuncio, gave every one of them some lashes of the discipline, and so tam'd the Spanish insolence by an Italian insolence, even more vain, and full of ostentation.

There was dispute a long time between the grandees of Spain and the Monks, which should have the administration of the government ; and by their brigues and intrigues, they alternately tripp'd up one another's heels. The person whom the queen trust-ed with the management of affairs, in the minority of Charles II. was father Nitard a Jesuit ; but he
was

was supplanted by don Juan, Philip the IVth's natural son. That Jesuit was so mortally hated by the populace, that, tho' he was the grand inquisitor, they cry'd out publickly in the streets of Madrid, long live the king, and the lord don Juan! and may he always conquer his enemies! but the D—I take the Jesuit who persecutes him! As much as father Nitard was hated by the Spaniards, he still thought to have the advantage over his rival at last; but the exasperated populace would not be satisfied with his disgrace; nothing would serve them but he must be banish'd out of Spain; and in short, they mutiny'd, and did not submit till they had obtain'd an order for sending back the disgrac'd minister into Italy. Let us get rid of this Jesuit, they cry'd, let us send him packing! He set out accordingly, and as he pass'd along the streets, every body reproach'd him. Undoubtedly, dear Monceca, thou art inclin'd to think that the fate of this friar was to be pity'd. Not at all: He was a Jesuit, and therefore knew how to bring himself out of trouble: For retiring to Rome, he was some time after made a Cardinal, by the intrigue of that very court of Spain which had some years before been oblig'd to banish him.

As a minister is every where liable to be storm'd, he is more expos'd to it in this country than in any part of the world. It very often happens, that a man who has succeeded perfectly well in a negotiation committed to his care, shall be sacrific'd to the honour of his country. It will be said that he has not understood its interests; and the disadvantageous articles of a treaty, which he is order'd to conclude, shall be laid to his charge. Of the truth of this fact the following is a convincing instance:

On the 18th of August 1680, the Spaniards surpriz'd a fort which the Portuguese had begun to erect in the island of St. Gabriel. As both the nations were at that time in peace with each other, the court of Lisbon was incens'd at that proceeding, and resolv'd to have signal satisfaction. The envoy of Portugal at Madrid receiv'd orders from the prince regent

gent to demand full reparation of the damages. The court of Spain having boggled in its answer, Portugal prepar'd to obtain what was refus'd by force of arms. Spain not being willing at that time to go to war with Portugal, because it was just going to break with France, sent the duke de Giovenazzo embassador to Lisbon, where he no sooner arriv'd but he began to complain, and demand satisfaction. That was then the Spanish court's method of negotiating. But this embassador was given to understand that he must talk in another style, and that all evasions were of no effect. He was told in plain terms, that the reparation which was demanded by the Portuguese court must be granted, or that methods were resolv'd to be taken to obtain it. After several disputes, the duke, before he sign'd the articles of the treaty, dispatch'd an expres to Madrid, to inform the court how affairs stood, and to receive his final orders. " Then did the ministers treat him as a man of no judgment, and one that had failed in his allegiance to the king ; saying, That all the rules of wisdom and good-sense were violated by his conduct, and so disadvantageous an accommodation ; and that his instruction gave him no power to conclude it. All these circumstances of anger and resentment were shewn for the honour of the nation ; but nevertheless, they did not delay one quarter of an hour to conclude the accommodation, and the ratification was sent with all speed to the duke de Giovenazzo ‡."

During Philip V's reign, there have been very able men in the Spanish ministry ; but the storms that rise in all courts have shook them out of their places. No minister is cry'd up more here than cardinal Alberoni. Not only the foreigners, of whom there are great numbers in this country, but several Spaniards also, do justice to this able minister. Since the accession of Philip V. to the crown, Spain has in a

‡ Memoirs of the court of Spain, &c.

great

great measure repair'd the misfortunes which she suffer'd by the misconduct of the persons that were employ'd in affairs, during the reigns of Philip IV. and Charles II. His troops are numerous, good and well-disciplin'd. Spain is one-fourth more populous than it was, by reason of the great number of French and Flemings that are settled ; and that crowd, which one while made no manner of figure, is now in as much credit as it was heretofore.

Thus the grandeur of a state depends on the princes that govern it, or on those whom they trust with the care of affairs. How many empires have been rais'd in a short space to the summit of greatness, at a time when every thing seem'd to threaten their ruin, and all by the wise conduct of one or two sovereigns who have repair'd all the mischief done by their predecessors ! Who would not have thought at the death of Henry III. that France would not have been ruin'd, and intirely broke to pieces ? Every thing seem'd to portend its destruction ; and yet, 8 or 10 years after, she was in a condition, by the management of Henry IV. to take a revenge for the affronts which she had receiv'd from her neighbours, during her misfortunes. Never had the Spaniards more cause to be afraid of France, than when that great prince was robb'd of his life by the rage of the monks. Spain believ'd that she should soon regain her superiority over her rival. But cardinal Richelieu, in the reign of Lewis XIII. perfected what Henry IV. had begun. This crown was astonish'd to see the very basis of her grandeur shaken ; and was convinc'd, tho' too late, that the French knew how to improve their advantages incomparably better than the Spaniards.

Tho' Spain has not so many resources as France has in her own power, yet two or three reigns may aggrandize her more than ever, as we may easily judge by what we have seen her do for some years past.

Farewell, dear Moncea ; and may the God of our ancestors heap blessings and prosperity on thee ; and make thee the father of a numerous family !

L E T -

LETTER CVII.

Kings of Spain formerly great slaves to grandeur, and to the ridiculous ceremonies of the Etiquette. Refrain'd from lying with their wives at certain times.---Their queens under great restraint likewise.---The queen of Charles II. of Spain, in danger of losing her life from an absur'd law of inflicting death upon those who touch'd her foot.---Some of the queens have been addicted to gallantry, particularly the wife of Philip IV.----The nobles formerly allow'd to gallant the queen's maids of honour.---Spaniards have a natural aversion to all other nations.---Some reflections on the precarious state of princes and how liable their prospects are to be baffled.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Madrid-----

Before Philip V. dear Monceca, the kings of Spain were slaves to their grandeur. They strictly kept to a certain regulation call'd the Etiquette, containing all the ceremonies which the Spanish monarchs were oblig'd to observe, the habits which they and their queens were to wear, the days when they were to go to the royal palaces, the time of their staying there, the days of their processions, their airings, travels, with the very hour when their majesties were oblig'd to go to bed, or to rise, the presents which the kings were to make to their mistresses, how they were to be dealt with when a happy rival has displac'd them, &c. Nay it has been said, that there was a certain number of days of the year mark'd down in that Etiquette, when the monarch must not lie with his queen. These, no doubt, were the dog-days, which Cleontis so pleasantly exclaims against in Moliere*.

* See his Amphitryon.

J E W I S H S P Y. 9

And really it was a very terrible hardship upon a monarch to restrain him from going to bed to his wife when he had a mind to it. I cannot imagine what charm of gravity the Spaniards found in that sort of celibacy, to make it an article of the Etiquette. A king of Spain, in love with his queen, was as much to be pitied as Charles II. king of England, when he put himself into the hands of the Presbyterians in Scotland, who made him hear four sermons a day, oblig'd him to do penance, and forbad him to game*.

The Etiquette was still a greater check to the queen-consorts, who were often forbid things the most innocent. The dutches de Terranova, Camerera Major, or one of the first ladies of the bed-chamber to the wife of Charles II. us'd to tell her majesty, that a queen of Spain must not look out of the windows of the palace.

An unlucky accident happen'd to this princess, wherein the forms of the Etiquette had like to have cost her her life. She was very fond of riding ; and several very fine horses having been brought to her from the province of Andalusia, she had a mind to try one of 'em ; but had no sooner mounted, when the horse pranc'd, and rising upon his hind-legs, had like to have fallen backwards upon her ; whereupon she fell off, and her foot unfortunately hitching in the stirrup, the horse ran away, and dragg'd her along to the utmost peril of her life. All the court were spectators of this misfortune, but nobody endeavour'd to help the queen, because the Etiquette forbad any man whatsoever, on pain of death, to touch the queen of Spain, and especially her foot. Why the foot should be more sacred than the hand, I can't conceive ; but in short the point was so settled, and nobody durst approach the queen's person. Charles II. who was very fond of his wife, and who, from the balcony of his window, saw the danger she was in, cry'd out vehemently ; but the inviolable

* Voltaire's letters concerning the English.

custom,

custom, and the untouchable foot, restrain'd the grave Spaniards from lending a hand to help her. However, 2 gentlemen, viz. Don Lewis de las Torres, and don Jaime de Soto Major, resolv'd to run all hazards, in spight of the law of the queen's foot, le loi del Pie por la Reina. One caught hold of the horse's bridle, and the other of the queen's foot; and, in taking it out of the stirrup, he put one of his fingers out of joint. This done, the dows immediately went home; and during, the confusion, they had an opportunity to saddle their horses, and fled from the punishment they had incur'd by daring to offend against so august a custom.

The queen, recovering from her fright, desired to see her two deliverers. A young lord, their friend, told her majesty they were oblig'd to fly from Madrid, to escape the punishment which they deserv'd. The queen, who was a French woman, knew nothing of the perogative of her heel; and, to be sure, never would, if it had not been for her fall. She thought it a very impertinent custom that men must be punish'd for saving her life, easily obtain'd their pardon from the king her husband, honour'd them with a present, and always granted them her protection.

The same Etiquette, which render'd the queen's heel so sacred, was a terrible abatement of her revenues. She had formerly 500 pistoles per month, but 200 of them were cut off for certain charities or bounties; for the princesses good works were also regulated by the Etiquette.

Notwithstanding the restraint the queens of Spain have been subject to, some of them have had their share of gallantry, and slipp'd their necks out of the painful ridiculous collar. The wife of Philip IV. if we may believe the historians of that time, took a liking to the count de Monterei, but was very much perplex'd how to make him sensible of it. The Etiquette had settled the ceremonial to be observ'd, with regard to the king's amours; but there was no provision in it with regard to those of the queens. This

prince

princess could find no better expedient than (one day as he was giving her an account of an affair, with which she had charg'd him) to let a paper drop out of her hand, which he eagerly snatch'd off the ground, and presented to her on his knees, ‘ Perhaps, says the queen, you imagine this paper to be of importance: You yourself shall be the judge of it. The count therein read these words: Estoy toda la noche, despierta, sola, triste, y defendido; mis penas son martirios, mis martirios son gustos: i. e. I spend the nights without rest, alone, dull, and forming desires; my pain is a martyrdom, but such a martyrdom as I take delight in. The duke de Monterei, who did not think that a queen of Spain could debase herself to such a degree as to be in love, seem'd not to understand the meaning of this billet-doux, but perus'd it with that coolness common to his country. The queen, observing his indifference, was so enrag'd, that she snatch'd it out of his hand with scorn, and said, go your ways; adding this, you may well say, Domine non sum dignus *, Lord, I am not worthy.’

There is no rank, nor any restraint, that can secure a heart from the shafts of love. All the jealousy and all the precautions of the Spaniards, only hasten the moment for robbing it of its freedom. One thing that will surprize thee, dear Monceca, is, that notwithstanding this jealous humour, notwithstanding the severity of the Etiquette, there was a custom establish'd, and authoriz'd at court, before Philip V. came to the crown, whereby the noblemen were privileg'd to gallant the queen's maids of honour; and even the marry'd men had the privilege of going under their chamber windows, and conversing with them by their fingers. This custom is a language which love has invented to make amends for the constraint that people are under in those countries, where they are not at liberty to explain

* Mémoirs of the court of Spain, by mademoiselle d' Aunois, part ii. p. 222.

themselves but by their eyes, and making certain tokens.

Pray, dear Aaron, reconcile, if thou canst, that odd custom of gallanting the ladies with the chaste ceremonial of the Etiquette. Tho' the Spanish dons have, since the accession of Philip V. abandon'd those ridiculous impertinences which they consecrated with the name of the ceremonial of the palace ; yet they would resume them with the same ease as they dropp'd them, were it not for the great number of foreigners, French, Italians, Flemings, &c. with which this court swarms ; and tho' it seems now to resemble that of France more than any other, yet the leaven of the Spanish gravity still remains there.

'Tis almost impossible for a man who is a native of this country, to take to manners different from those of his ancestors ; and this is a truth which will easily be acknowledg'd, if one considers the hatred which the Spaniards bear to all nations. There was a time, when their antipathy to the French was carry'd to an excess, but they say 'tis very much abated ; yet, since I have been here, it appears to me, that there are no two nations whose genius's are more irreconcileable than the Spanish and French. Charles II. caus'd the necks of two parrots, which his queen kept, to be twisted off, because they could speak nothing but French ; and when he went into her apartment, and found two little dogs there, which she was infinitely fond of, get out, get out, ye French dogs, said he ; fuera, fuera, perros Frances.

I admire, dear Moncea, the secret springs of providence. Who would have told that king, so great an enemy as he was to the French, that his kingdom would shortly devolve to a prince of that nation ? Heaven sometimes takes a pleasure in sporting with the spleen of weak mortals. It sees their designs, and laughs at their projects. Princes, in the view of the Deity, are but mere men. He looks on them in the rank of his other creatures, and their inclination often finds less favour with the Deity than that of some sages whose desires are regulated by virtue.

Consider

Consider, dear Moncea, the bounds which have been set by the Almighty Being, to the ambition of several princes who have attempted to alter the face of the world ; how he has stopped them in the midst of their career, and in the twinkling of an eye destroyed and overturned that grandeur which they have endeavoured to raise. To go no further than our own time, look back upon Charles XII. King of Sweden, that modern Alexander, who was preparing to bind the Muscovite in chains. But providence ordered it otherwise. His glory vanished in an instant, and passed away like a dream. That king who conquered such a posse of enemies, and who gave himself crowns, became a wanderer and a fugitive, was obliged to fly to Barbarians for refuge, and had no remains left of his past greatness but the unhappy remembrance of it.

Lewis XIV. was two or three times on the verge of compleating his ambitious projects, and of intirely destroying that balance of power which had been so long settled among the potentates of Europe. If he had dyed immediately after the treaty of Nimeguen, one would have thought he might have effected his designs ; but he survived that glorious peace, and the same hand that had almost rendered him master of Europe, reduced him within an ace of his ruin. When his enemies triumphed over him too much, and ascribed to themselves what was owing only to the goodness of the Supreme Being, that same Being turned the scale at Denain, and by degrees reduced things to their former condition ; so that, after a war of 10 years, neither of the parties had gained much ground.

I laugh, dear Moncea, when I see certain politicians foretelling the ruin or aggrandisement of a people, 20 or 30 years beforehand. To hear them, one would almost swear that the Divine Being had imparted his august secrets to them, and permitted them to look into that book where he has entered the destinies of all states and empires. The death of one prince, the marriage of another, a confessor,

a mistress, a nothing, in short, destroys all the vain conjectures, and all the false reasonings, of these pretended politicians.

All Europe thought, one while, that the genius of the house of Bourbon would strike to the house of Austria; and who would not have thought as much in the time of Charles V. who was almost master of all Europe? But if that same Charles V. was to come upon earth now, how great would be his surprise? ‘ What’s become, he would say, of my kingdom of Spain? The answer would be, ‘tis in the possession of a prince of the house of Bourbon. ‘ And what of Franche Comte, my favourite province? The answer would be, France has taken it as well as Alsace, and a part of Hainault and Flanders. And, what’s become, the Monarch would also say, of the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily? These two, the answer would be, are also in the hands of a prince of the house of Bourbon; and besides these losses which your descendants have sustained, Holland and six other provinces turned Commonwealths, a little after your death. If it be so, Charles V. would be apt to say, my descendants sure must be all extinct. Pardon me, the reply would be, they subsist still, and are as potent as ever. Alas! he would cry out, how can that be? Why thus, he would be told; your successors are masters of Tuscany, the dutchies of Parma, Placentia and Milan; consequently you see, that what they possess in Italy is equal to what you had there. Instead of Spain, which you had in some measure dismembered from the other estates of your family, by dividing your inheritance, they have all Hungary, Transylvania, and a part of Wallachia. Those kingdoms which border upon one another, and join to Austria, form, if we include Bohemia, Silesia and Moravia, one of the most magnificent governments in the world; and being thus put together, are really equivalent to all the states which you left so dispersed.’

I am

I am certain, dear Moncea, that Charles V. if he was to hear all this, would be fully convinced that 'tis with empires as it is with money ; and that the Divine Being has decreed that they should have a sort of circulation, and pass into different families, and often into those which one would think should least of all expect them.

Farewell, dear Moncea ; live content ; and may the God of our fathers crown thee with prosperity !

L E T T E R C VIII.

Concerning the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel.---Several nations pretend their language to be the original.---Diodorus's notions relating to the creation of men.---The absurd hypothesis of Ericus, endeavouring to prove Greek to be the most antient.---Moncea's opinion concerning the formation of languages.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Amsterdam

TH O' there's a variety of religious sects at Amsterdam, yet the number of languages which are spoke there is greater. This diversity of idioms often makes me think of the famous confusion of languages at the time of the audacious undertaking to carry the tower of Babel to the firmament.

Were we to follow the opinion which is most generally received, and founded upon the scriptures, we should believe that the Hebrew, or the language of our antient patriarchs, was the universal language of the world before Noah's children began to erect that famous tower. Yet this opinion, how probable soever, is not admitted universally. Several authors pretend, that what Moses says of the confusion of tongues, denotes nothing more than the misunderstanding which happened among men so rash as to

offer to erect an edifice against the Divinity. And these authors think their opinion justified by the practice of the orientals; who, after the dispersion of nations, made use of different dialects, rather than languages. They add, that had there not been that miraculous confusion of tongues, the scattering of the people, the establishment of empires and republics, the diversity of laws and customs, and the commerce of nations already separated, might occasion some alteration in the language. *

The manner in which the generality of languages is formed by being derived from one another, seems to support this hypothesis. The Greeks, who, in all appearance, were a colony of Egyptians and Phœnicians, insensibly altered the language of their fathers, and by degrees the Greek tongue was formed upon the ruins of the Egyptian, which the Greeks totally forgot. All the different idioms of the Persians, Scythians and oriental nations, have a very great affinity with one another, and seem to flow from the Hebrew as their natural fountain. Every day we see new languages formed, others extinct or declining; and it is very possible that the first difference which creeps into a language may happen naturally like those which we perceive happen every day.

The French is an authentic proof of the manner how languages are born, and die insensibly. No doubt but the French which is spoke at this day, comes from that which was the language there five hundred years ago: But if they who spoke it then were now to come again into the world, they would be as much at a loss to understand what a Parisian of the street of St. Denys says, as such Parisian would be to understand them.

The French is not the only language in which this total change has happened: 'Tis common to a great many others. Quintilian affirms, that the

* See father Lami's Rhetoric; or, the Art of Speaking. lib. i. cap. xv. p. 79.

language which was spoke in his time, was so different from that of the primitive Romans, that the priests understood very little of the hymns which the first priests sang to the Deities whom they worshipped *.

So impossible it is to prove demonstrably that all, or at least, the principal languages were formed at the time of the confusion of Babel, that there's no knowing what language was spoke at that time. There are many people that deviate from the common opinion, which give the preference to the Hebrew. There are intire nations that challenge this pre-eminence. The Egyptians, the Ethiopians, the Chinese, the Greeks too, as ignorant as they were of their own original, believed their language to be as antient as any other whatsoever. A Greek author † very confidently affirms, that men springing out of the earth like the herbs of the field, and frogs in a pond, and by consequence born in several parts of the world, formed themselves into several different societies, who invented each their language. That none but an ideot will assert, that men are formed in a night's time, like mushrooms in a garden, is what I grant ; but the uncertainty which the Greeks were under concerning the origin of mankind, and of the difference of languages, made them adopt so extravagant an opinion ‡.

An author **, whose works were printed at Venice many years ago, went half way to revive the old hypothesis of the Greeks. 'Tis true, he did not declare that men sprung out of the earth ; for this supposition would have appeared somewhat extraordinary at that time of day ; but he affirmed, that Adam spoke Greek ; and he argued after this man-

* Quint. Instit. Orat. p. 11.

† Diodorus of Sicily.

‡ That was really the opinion of the politeit Greeks, who had a notion that they were all born in the country where they dwelt, and that they were produced out of the earth like insects. Therefore they assum'd the vain title of Indigenz. See father Lami's Art of Speaking, lib. i. chap. xv. p. 77.

** John Peter Ericus.

net, as I find it reported by a learned French rhetorician, who has given the most just summary of the matter of any writer that I know. Ericus's proofs are, that as soon as the first man opened his eyes, he admired the beauty of the handy works of God, and cryed out, O! consequently he hit upon the Greek ω : And afterwards the υ, when no sooner was Eve taken from his rib, but he cryed out υυ. He says that the first-born of Adam crying at his birth, the noise he made was, εεεε; as the second child, who, says the author, had a squeaking voice, pronounced, when he cryed, ττττ. By such arguments as these he pretends to prove that the Greek language is as natural as a certain singing is to any particular species of birds *.

Is it justifiable, dear Isaac, for men of learning, or at least such as profess themselves students, to vent such wild absurdities? I could prove by this author's own way of arguing, if I had a fancy for it, that the language of the Laplanders, or that of the Caribbees, is the most antient. I could easily discover, in the first things done by Adam, matter enough to imagine that he articulated the oddest sounds. I should be glad to know of this writer, who revealed to him that when Adam saw the wonderful works of the creation by God, he chose to cry out O rather than A. This first vowel denotes a greater astonishment than the other: For it is formed by opening the mouth, and commonly falls from us when we are struck with admiration: Whereas O is a sound not so proper to express our surprize §. I laugh, dear Isaac, while I confute such trifles. Methinks I see M. Jourdain taking his first lesson out of the grammar, and exclaiming stupidly,

* Father Lami's art of speaking, ut supra.

§ The reader will observe that the author means the A in the French alphabet, which is sounded different from what 'tis in ours, as if we were to say aw.

Ah ! les belles Choses ! les belles Choses ! O charming things * !

How ridiculous soever is the supposition that Adam cryed out, O ! when he saw the wonderful works of God ; yet it is nothing near so silly a conjecture as to found the I, or Iota of the Greeks, upon the squeaking voice of his second child. 'Tis really abusing the liberty which some authors have taken to impose upon the publick, the causing such silly stuff to be printed, and giving it out too with such a dogmatal assurance. Such fooleries are scarce tollerable even in Rabelais. Is it not better to own frankly one's ignorance of a thing, than to go to persuade people we know it, and to make use of such pitiful reasons to demonstrate it ?

I believe, dear Isaac, that if a man will argue rationally, it must be honestly confessed, that no body knows what language Adam spoke ; and that nevertheless it was more likely to be the Hebrew than any other. After all, what matters it if it be evident that the confusion of Babel only spread over the understanding, and that what is said of the origin of languages must be understood in this sense ? 'Tis sufficient for us to know for our satisfaction, that before the dispersion of the nations, there was but one language ; and that all others were formed afterward. For as to the opinion of Diodorus of Sicily, and some atheistical philosophers of his age, who pretend that men born of the earth, formed several languages the moment they began to exist, according as they ranged themselves into different societies, 'tis an absurd mistake, which flows from their abominable principles. 'Tis probable, that if men could not have understood one another absolutely as soon as they were created, instead of staying together, and endeavouring to unite together, and form themselves into societies, they would have wandered into the woods, like the animals,

* Bourgeois Gentilhomme, a comedy of Moliere.

and

and would never have sought, by a common consent, to attach certain ideas to certain sounds.

Whatever the Atheists may say of it, we must have recourse to the Divine Being to trace the origin of the first language that was ever spoke by men. 'Twas the divinity that taught it to Adam, or at least infused it into him, with all the other knowledge which he gave him ; tho' I am far from asserting, that our first father received universal Science from God : For it is my opinion that the Divine Being only granted him so much knowledge as was necessary for his prudent conduct.

If the supreme Being was not the source from whence the first language flowed that ever was spoke by men, I would fain know how men, formed like flowers that spring up in a meadow, could communicate their ideas to one another, and assemble and agree together about such and such things as are necessary to the formation of a language of which none of them had an idea ? Is it not probable that they would rather have endeavoured to gratify their irregular appetites, than to form that surprising academy which the atheists constitute of men, who knew no sound that could be of use to them for communicating their ideas ?

' God, says one of the most illustrious and most rational philosophers *, having made man a sociable creature, not only inspir'd him with a desire, and put him under the necessity of living with those of his own species, but moreover gave him the faculty of speech, that it might be the great instrument, and the common band of that society. For this reason man has naturally his organs fram'd in such a manner, that they are proper to form the articulate sounds which we call Words. But this was not sufficient to form language ; for parrots, and several other birds, may be trained up to form articulate and very distinct sounds ; and yet

* Locke's Philosophical Essay on Human Understanding, lib. iii. cap. i. p. 222.

those

‘ those animals are no ways capable of language.
‘ It was therefore necessary, that besides articulate
‘ sounds, man should be capable of making use of
‘ those sounds as signs of inward conceptions, and
‘ to establish them as so many tokens of the ideas
‘ which we have in the mind, to the end that by such
‘ means they might be manifested to others, and
‘ that consequently men might communicate their
‘ thoughts to one another.’

This, dear Isaac, is what we ought to abide by. Reason, and the light of nature, convince us of the justness of this way of arguing ; which, let what will be said against it, cannot, I think, be shaken. Nevertheless, as there is no opinion, how evident foever it appears, but may be attended with difficulties that escape the notice of those who give their consent to it with a positiveness that hinders them from perceiving the force of the objections ; I shall be oblig'd to thee, dear Isaac, if thou wilt let me know thy opinion : I shall be the fonder of my own, when I know it has thy approbation. And if thou judgest that I do not think rightly, I shall endeavour to get quit of my prejudices, and to relish thy arguments. No body has a better talent than thou hast for persuasion ; a gift which is only bestow'd upon few persons. A great many people confound their adversaries without affecting their minds, and making them alter their opinion. A regent of a college, arm'd with syllogism and enthymems, pushes his antagonist quite out of the field. He makes use of the privilege of abusing words to perplex reason, and from one argument to another, reasoning always according to the rules of logic, he comes at laist to establish the greatest absurdity ; but without convincing those with whom he disputes. The mind cannot bear with arguments which it perceives to be false, tho' it cannot explain the fallacy. This sort of argumentation, which the Nazarene doctors so much cry up, has a much greater tendency to corrupt the understanding, than to aid and perfect it. And we see that there are a great many

many people, who, tho' they never study, reason in a manner much more clear and concise than certain professors of philosophy.

'Tis not to the ignorance of logic that we must ascribe the defect which is observ'd in most mens way of arguing, but to the deficiency of ideas, to the erroneousness and obscurity of what ideas they have, to the bad principles which they have imbib'd, and to the prejudices with which they are tainted. And they argue more or less sensibly, according as they have more or less of these failings.

Farewell, dear Isaac; live content and happy; and let me hear from thee.

LETTER CIX.

A description of the inquisition.---The Spaniards barbarous to excess.---A young Jewish girl, burnt for her religion, whom the queen dared not to intercede for.---The shocking cruelty of the Pontiffs who grant long indulgences to those who assist or are present at their horrid executions.---The fury and implacable malice of the monks insult the manes of the dead..

JACOB EBITO, to AARON MONCECA.

Madrid.-----

I Am now, dear Monceca, to present thee an account of the most exquisite scene of horrors; and to give thee a picture of that barbarous inquisition, nourish'd and fatten'd by the blood of our brethren, and by that of several unhappy Nazarenes, who have had the misfortune to have any of the monks for their enemies. Don't think I am prompted by spite and envy, to put colours that are too black upon any thing. I shall only tell thee what I have heard from several French, Germans, and English, who have been witnesses of the bloody executions ordered by this monkish senate, which has been directed

rected by the furies, conducted by avarice, and supported by superstition.

When an Auto de Fé, or an act of faith, is order'd by the inquisition, a great scaffold is erected in the great square; where all the world hires balconies and windows, and comes to see this terrible spectacle, as to a solemn feast, at which the whole court, king, queen, ladies, ambassadors, &c. are present.

The inquisitor's chair is a sort of judgment-seat, rais'd higher than the king's. Opposite to this throne an altar is erected, upon which the Nazarenes offer to the Deity the blood of those unhappy creatures that they are for depriving of life. In the midst of their ceremonies they break off their prayers, when the grand inquisitor descends from his amphitheatre, in his pontificalibus; and, after having made his salute to the altar, which is erected to avarice and cruelty, he goes up to the king's throne, followed by some of the officers of the inquisition; and the prince, who then stands up with the constable of Castile by his side, holding the royal sword erected, swears to observe the oath, which is read by a member of the royal council; an oath which obliges him to authorize all the actions of the inquisition.

This done, the unfortunate people condemn'd to be tortur'd are brought forth, and carry'd all round the public square. Those who are not condemn'd, and who are only doom'd to cruel imprisonment, wear a sanbenito, which is a large scapulary of yellow cloth, or canvas shirt, charg'd with St. Andrew's cross, painted red. They who are so unfortunate as to be burnt, are dress'd in long robes of a grey colour, full of painted flames. And they who are not willing to turn Nazarenes wear the effigies and pictures of devils, besides a sort of scapulary, upon which is describ'd, Fouego rebuelto, i. e. a fire stir'd up.

The grandees of Spain, and the chief Spanish noblemen, supply the place of marshal's-men at these frightful

frightful ceremonies ; for they bring the pretended criminals that are to be burnt, to the stake, bound with halters. Thus do superstition and bigotry make the Don Diego's, the Don Sancho's, the Don Pedro's, and the Don Garcia's, not only slaves to the Monks, but the lacqueys to the hangmen.

To increase the torture of the poor wretches that are doom'd to the rage of the flames, a parcel of ignorant inhuman friars bawl out the most scandalous reproaches in their ears, together with their senseless arguments. In fine, they are thrown headlong into the fire which is kindled for them. Upon this occasion, dear Monceca, appears the constancy of our nation. There are several faithful Jews, the descendants of the antient Israelites, who throw themselves into the flames ; others burn their hands and feet before they leap into the fire, and preserving as much presence of mind as Mutius Scævola that illustrious Roman, who suffer'd his hand to be consum'd in a coal fire, they sing praises to the God of Israel in the midst of such terrible torment.

The barbarous Spaniards are not mov'd by all these cruelties ; neither age nor sex, nothing can affect them. A Nazarene author, whom they have no reason to suspect, reports what follows. ‘ Among the Jews that were burnt, there was a girl seemingly not seventeen years of age, who, standing on that side where the queen was, petition'd her for her pardon. She was wonderfully pretty, and she said to her, “ great queen, will not your royal presence, make some alteration in my misfortune ; consider how young I am, and that I am to suffer for a religion which I suck'd in with my mother's milk.” The queen turn'd away her eyes, and seem'd to take great pity on her. Yet she never durst so much as mention the saving her *

What enchantment, therefore, dear Monceca, could make men so blind as to become slaves to such cruel-

* Memoirs of the Court of Spain, by M. d' Aunoy, part II.
p. 66.

ties? Can any nation be so infatuated, so abandon'd to it's prejudices, as not to make use of reason, and not to abolish executions so contrary to the law of nature? The Nazarene monks are very pernicious magicians, because they confound the human understanding, and consequently colour the foulest deeds with the title of virtues. Consider, dear Monceca, what an unlimited power they have in Spain. A queen dares not intercede for the pardon of a young girl of sixteen, tho' she has been guilty of no other crime than believing the religion which she imbib'd in her infancy. The authority of the throne itself durst not stand to dispute with the monastick power, and is afraid of being a prey to the attacks of that monster supported by superstition!

The most shocking thing of all in these bloody tragedies, is the indulgences that the Roman pontiffs have attach'd to them. They who lead the poor condemn'd wretches to the fire, and throw them into the flames, gain indulgences for 100 years; and they who content themselves only with seeing them executed, obtain 50. Just heaven! What horror, and what abomination is this, dear Monceca! The most crying and most detestable crimes are made a salutary means to attain to the presence of the Divine Being! Avarice, cruelty, fury and rage, are the virtues of Spanish Nazarenism! And the Nazarenes, who in France and Germany, boast their abhorrence of blood, have brethren in the inquisition countries, that consecrate murder under the pretence of religion, and make their cruelties an essential article of their faith.

The day after those unhappy wretches are burnt is a sort of festival, when all the Monks go in procession to the principal church; and they carry the pictures of the condemned, as if they were trophies of a victory obtained over the enemy, with these words, Morreo quemado por Hereje relapso, i. e. I die for relapsing into heresy; and under those who persist in declaring their innocency, is inscribed, Por Hereje convicto negativo; i. e. For denying

their Heresy after being convicted of it: And under those who persist in their belief; Por Hereje contumas, i. e. For obstinate Heresy.

The fury of the monks is not yet satisfied with this sort of triumph; it extends so far as to insult the manes of such as have been dead many years: For they put into certain chests (which they call Carochas) the bones of some which they dig out of the ground, and even proceed against them after death. Consequently death and burial can be no screen from the hatred of the monks; for they persecute their enemies beyond the grave. 'Tis not only in Spain where such sacrileges are committed, but in several other countries they are guilty of such outrages; and the tombs are there violated upon pretence of religion.

If one did not see it, one could hardly believe what a vast power the monks have acquired to in the countries of the inquisition. Reason cannot bear to be told, that there have been men so foolish, and so weak, as by submitting to the arbitrary power of the monks, to abandon their natural and civil rights, and to divest the common tribunals of their legal jurisdiction, in order to transfer it to new ones, composed of the dregs of mankind.

The power which the monks have acquired is founded upon the most crafty politics. A counterfeit zeal to extirpate our nation, and certain Nazarenes that were called Heretics, served as a pretence. At first, the inquisition was only established to take cognizance of one single case. But the silly people did not see that this single case drew in all others after it. For what actions, good or bad, are not brought before the spiritual court? Judaism, Heresy, the observance of all the precepts of the Nazarene law, oaths, crimes committed against the Divine Worship, bigamy, sodomy, the robbing of churches, the insults committed on priests and monks, sorcery, and in short, a long train of many other matters that are linked with the Nazarene faith.

The people were astonished when they saw, too late, what an exorbitant power they had given to the monks. They had neither the strength nor the courage to take it from them ; they kissed the chains which they had put about their own limbs ; and they became the chief instruments of the tyranny under which they groaned. In fine, the sovereign pontiffs, by the help of their bulls, and by the assistance of those same monks, whose authority they were for favouring in order to establish their own, persuaded the people at the long-run, that the maintenance of the power of the clergy was a thing necessary to religion. The superstitious Spaniards, the ignorant Portuguese, and the fanatic Italians, not only consecrated the unjust tribunal of the inquisition throughout their own countries, but would fain have established it among their neighbours. However the latter too well knew this infernal court of justice to submit to it. Spain lost a part of the Netherlands for attempting to subject them to the inquisition ; and France, THEN so wise as not to suffer its privileges to be invaded, vigorously resisted all the attacks of the sovereign pontiffs.

The tribunal of the holy office is so abhorred by several Nazarene nations, that the very name of it makes them tremble. A Jew whose father has been burnt, and who must have suffered the same punishment if he had not fled, is not more shocked at the terrible name of the inquisition, than a counsellor of the parliament of Paris when mention is made to him of that horrid tribunal. There's not a country gentleman but had rather suffer the worst of misfortunes than be subject to any jurisdiction, except that of the temporal judges, or to own any other master but his king, or any other executioners of his will and pleasure but the parliaments.

Notwithstanding the credit which the monks had for a long time in France, and especially at the time of the league, when they were supported by Spain, they never durst introduce the inquisition into that kingdom, tho' they secretly attempted it; but they

met with so much opposition, that they plainly saw they should intirely ruin their credit, instead of augmenting it.

And indeed, all the several states of the kingdom are concerned to hinder the establishment of this unjust tribunal. The king who is an absolute sovereign in his kingdom, would have a rival in the grand inquisitor. The twelve parliaments would be little better than country court-leets. The forces would be more under the command of the monks than of their general officers. The bishops would find the common priests bearing greater sway than themselves in the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The clergy, as well as all the common people, would become slaves to the monks, and the victims of their avarice and ambition. The French nobility, who have been so much used to despise this gentry, and to look upon them in general as the excrement of mankind, would be very glad if they could have the favour to be admitted into the number of Familiaries del Sancto Officio, or Familiaries of the Holy Office. And in short, the very dukes and peers would have the privilege of gaining a hundred years indulgence, by conducting unhappy people inhumanly to the stake ; and consequently would have the reputation of being the valets of the executioners.

There's no fear now, dear Moncea, that the inquisition will ever be introduced into any of those countries where it is not already established. Its terrors are too well known ; and I am certain, that there's not an European in his senses, but would rather turn Mussulman, than be subject to a cruel dominican, or such other implacable persecutor.

Farewell, dear Moncea ; and mayst thou never live but in countries where wisdom and justice are as well established as that in which thou art now.

LETTER CX.

Bad authors very numerous in Holland.—The artifices made use of by the booksellers to get their writings disposed of.—The city of Rotterdam paid great regard to the merit of Erasmus.—The industry of the dutch commended.—The natives of Holland greatly mistaken in the method of educating their children.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

Amsterdam—

IN a late letter of mine I mentioned what a great number of printers and booksellers there were at Amsterdam: There's the same number in the other towns in proportion. No doubt thou wilt conclude, there must also be a large tribe of writers in the country to serve so many presses, and to furnish the booksellers with the new books which they publish every day. There is nothing so true; for the authors here are almost as numerous as the statues were in old Rome, whose number exceeded that of the inhabitants of a common town*.

If one were to make a muster of all the sorry scribes that swarm in the United Provinces, one might raise a colony, in which good sense and judgment have not been seen for a long time.

Thou wilt be at a loss to what to ascribe this multitude of authors, and to imagine how it comes to pass that the Cacoethes Scribendi is more infectious in this country than in any other. There's a concurrence of several circumstances to maintain and augment the number of those stainers of paper.

* Has statuas primum Tuscii in Italia invenisse referuntur, quas amplexa posteritas pene parem populum urbi dedit quam natura procreavit. Cassidor. Var. lib. vii. cap. 15. "The Tuscans are reported to have been the first inventors of these statues, which their posterity were so fond of, that the number which was carv'd was almost equal to that of the souls which were born."

Some are monks, stripped of their orders; who, after having abandoned their convents, and being destitute of subsistence, fancy that a book is as easily made as a sorry sermon. Others, hearing the common talk of new books that are printed, become authors by infection. The itch of writing in this country, is a distemper that spreads like Fanaticism, I compare bad writers to the convulsionaries of Paris; for, like them, they are acted by a sort of enthusiasm, of which they don't know the cause. The booksellers scarce trouble themselves whether a book be good or bad: If it be but new, they always find customers for it, by advertising it in the Gazette, with some important title. Amongst the many journals that are publish'd, they have always a property in the impression of one or other of them, in which, by consequence, they give a pompous character of the most pitiful book; which at the same time is no grievance to the public, because they have known for a long while, that works of this kind are only written to damn the copies of some booksellers, and to commend those of others.

When a book is so bad that a good part of the edition remains unsold, 'tis advertis'd a second time, a year after, under another title, with the addition of some preface as bad as the work itself; and by the help of this craft, the rest of the edition is all bought up. In short, they are never at a loss, in Holland, for expedients to put off those books which the booksellers can't vend to their customers; for those that they can't dispose of by retail, they sell by the lump to the butter-women and grocers, and especially to the latter; in whose shops one may find a great number of tracts printed ten or twelve years ago; so that, fix or seven authors excepted, which are for the most part natives of Holland, there are few writers that live in this country but may there pick up a large collection of the books they have publish'd.

It would not be to any purpose to give you the names of these shrimps in the commonwealth of learning; whose names are moreover as contemptible as

their

their works. I believe it will be as well if I endeavour to give thee an idea of some writers that are worth knowing : Boerhaave, Gravesande, and Vitriarius, are great men. Mufembroek has made a collection of good experiments in physic ; and thou art not ignorant that Barbeyrac is a good translator. There are also in the academies of these provinces some other persons, who are to be esteem'd for their learning and probity. Among the ministers and the clergy, there are also some of distinguish'd merit ; and I have heard Saurin mention'd a thousand times as an excellent preacher. But the number of these authors is so small in proportion to the others, that there's no comparison ; tho' in order to do justice to the Dutch, it must be confess'd, that all those bad writers, or at least the major part of them, are foreigners. There are several that pretend to write in French ; but when their books come into France, every body is surpriz'd to find them written in the Gascoign or Norman, or the style of Lower Bretagne. Nay, there are some which do so partake of the different idioms, that there's no guessing what language they are written in ; and one would swear it to be French, patch'd out of Greek.

'Tis to be fear'd, dear Isaac, that this tribe of paltry authors will intirely corrupt the taste, not only of the inhabitants of this country, but also of most people who apply themselves to reading. I compare the shops of certain booksellers to the laboratories of some noted chymists, who compose philters to disturb the human understanding, and to poison the nourishment which it may be capable of receiving from the reading of good authors. As in France they examine books before they are printed, to see whether the authors have said any thing to expose the monks, I could wish that the books which are printed in Holland were revised, to see if there be nothing in them contrary to good-sense ; and that they would do the same service to mankind as they do to a company of lazy drones, whose order and profession have been by antient superstition render'd venerable.

nerable. At Paris they make no scruple to hinder the impression of a work which bears too hard upon the court of Rome, or which treats too freely of indulgences, or which extols Arnaud for a great man: But, alas! is it not of much more importance to stop the circulation of thirty tracts which deprave the reader's taste, banish good-sense, and darken the light of reason?

I wonder whether the Dutch, who are always attentive to the welfare and tranquility of civil society, have made this reflection. Perhaps they have. The fear of introducing a custom, which, in process of time, might strike at that liberty which is so dear to them, has hinder'd them from stopping the circulation of those books, so pernicious not only to the republic of letters, but even to all mankind: For the Dutch are fond of the sciences, have an infinite esteem for men of learning, and give them a hearty reception from what country soever they come. Bayle and several other Frenchmen have been courted and caref'd by the chief members of the republic. We observe in Holland what has been seen in few other countries for near 1700 years. The city of Rotterdam had such a sense of the virtues of Erasmus, that it caus'd his statue to be erected in the public square. 'Tis paying a true regard to the merit of the learned, to erect such a monument to an able writer. This statue seems to have chang'd both its form and matter, in proportion as the republic flourish'd. It was at first of wood only, and was erected in 1540. Afterwards there was one of stone, set up in 1567. And lastly, one of brass, the same that we see now, was plac'd there in 1622. If we live to another century, perhaps we may see one of gold. What is surprising is, that Delft, which is so near to Rotterdam, and which has been no less honour'd by the celebrated Grotius, has not erected the like statue to that great man.

When I consider, dear Isaac, the manner how this state was form'd, I cannot forbear to admire what industry is capable of doing, when 'tis supported by

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the love of liberty. A country floating in the water, a land uncultivated, and which scarce produc'd any thing, is become, in a short time the magazine and centre of all the riches in the world.

None but a people so laborious as the Dutch, could have, as it were, drawn their country by force out of the sea, by the dykes they have made ; and none but a nation so powerful as they, could support the expence which those very dykes cost them. They are oblig'd to be at infinite care and pains to maintain and keep them up, because the safety of their country depends on their being in good repair. The sea is indeed the nurse of the Dutch ; but then 'tis, on the other hand, the worst enemy they have : For in the * year 1574, the sea wash'd away one hundred and twelve houses from the village of Scheveling, the church of which is now near the sea ; whereas formerly it stood in the middle of the village.

The repairs which they are continually oblig'd to make, and the other expences which the government is put to, are the reason that the taxes are very heavy in Holland. They who know the state of affairs, don't murmur at them ; and in this country one shall hardly meet with malecontents, those odious and contemptible creatures who seek to establish their fortune upon the ruins of a government, and who found their hopes in the future troubles and calamities of their country, which they are always ready to distract. On the other hand, every man being content with enjoying full liberty, contributes with pleasure to the necessities of the state, and looks upon the republic as a good mother whom he is oblig'd to support.

All the fault I find with the Dutch, is a blind sort of love they have for their children, which hinders them from correcting them, and giving them a proper education. I could wish they were not so complaisant in this respect. The Lacedæmonians train'd up their youth after a different manner ; for they

* Miffon's voyage to Holland.

inured them to a rigid discipline, and form'd them betimes to all manner of exercises. In short they inspired them with so great a love to virtue, and with so firm a constancy that upon a certain day there was one of them who, holding a flambeau at a particular ceremony, suffer'd it to burn his hand rather than he would interrupt it*.

'Tis in the time of youth that the manners and first inclinations ought to be formed. There are a thousand faults which age and reason have much ado to suppress, when they are by habit render'd common and familiar. 'Tis almost impossible to cure the Italians intirely of superstition, because they have always some faith remaining in a number of chimæras with which they have been fed from their cradles. In like manner the Dutch find it very difficult to shake off a sort of self-conceit and fondness for their own opinions, which is owing to the too great complaisance of their parents in gratifying all their silly desires. However, people of distinction seem desirous to take some care of their children's education, but unluckily they never give them any but very bad tutors.

One thing which no doubt will extremely surprise thee is, that a nation of such good-sense as the Dutch, should scarce ever commit the first education of their chief youth to any but monks stripp'd of their order, and to little saucy priests. A neglect so unworthy of commendation might be attended with terrible inconveniences, and a repentance the more mortifying, because too late. What, sure ! are there no natives of the country fit to discharge an employment of such importance, and so worthy of the most serious

* Cicero speaking of the resolution, constancy and courage of the Lacedæmonian youth, says, that it often happen'd, that they would fight with one another till they died, rather than own they were beat: Adolescentium greges Lacedæmone vidi mus ipsi; incredibili contentione certantes, pugnis, calcibus, unguibus, morsu denique, ut examinarentur, prius quam se victos faterentur. Cicero Tusculan. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 27.

attention? I can't persuade myself to be of that opinion. But the fondness of the women for such as sham the gentleman, and for petits maitres, and the too great complaisance of their husbands, make them generally prefer the frivolous to the solid, and that which is detrimental to that which is profitable. The girls are, in this respect, much better taken care of than the boys; and the women, to whose care they are committed, are incomparably better qualified for the due discharge of their employment.

I shall soon depart from this country, dear Isaac, for Berlin, and from thence I shall go to Hamburgh; where I have some affairs of consequence to settle with Isaac Meio. I shall make it my business to inform thee of what I find most remarkable among the Germans, who are a people whom thou art better acquainted with than I am. The frequent journeys thou madest formerly to most of the courts of Germany, have furnish'd thee with the knowledge of certain men and things, which I cannot hope to acquire.

I shall be obliged to thee for telling me whether thou thinkst such reflections as I shall communicate to thee to be just; and shall reckon myself happy if my letters may continue to please thee; for which end I shall omit nothing in my power. I read thine to several learned men when I was in France; and they seem'd very well pleas'd with them. I know that certain bigots and monks, who saw several of them, treated thee as an heretic and an obstinate Jew. But thou need'st not be in much pain for their approbation; since what an antient Nazarene doctor said of the pagan priests, may be apply'd to them, viz. They who teach wisdom, are not the same as they who are at the head of religion: The philosophers don't shew the way to heaven, nor the priests that to wisdom*.

Farewell, dear Isaac; live content, and be happy.

* *Philosophia, et religio deorum, disjunctæ sunt, longeque differunt; siquidem alii sunt professores sapientiæ, per quos utique ad Deos adituri; aliique religionis antistites; per quos sapere non dicitur.* Laetant. *Divin. Institut.* lib. iv. cap. iii. p. 227.

LETTER CXI.

The women in Spain under great constraint from the jealousy of their husbands, yet contrive to manage affairs of gallantry with the monks.—A merry adventure between a Carmelite friar, and a Spanish lady.—A remarkable story of Fontana Rosa, an Italian peacher.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Madrid—

THE women in Spain, dear Monceca, are the prisoners of their slaves; for as there's no country in the world where the men are more submissive to them; so there are few countries where the women are under so much constraint. Tho' foreigners, who have for some time past sojourned in this kingdom, have taken off a great deal of it, and chang'd that shocking confinement into a genteler sort of slavery; yet they are still watch'd very narrowly. Such of them as are of too mean extraction to go to court, scarce see any body but their relations, and some monks: But the others have more liberty, especially since the court of Spain has follow'd that of France in some of its manners and customs.

Tho' the women are so strictly watch'd, thou must not think that the honour of their husbands is secure against the stains which it often receives in other countries. The monks here are what the petits maîtres, or beaux, are in France. A cordelier is as dangerous a person as the most amiable person of quality. He knows all the expedients for captivating the hearts of the fair; and his habit gains him admittance into all families, to deceive the most jealous husband. The specious title of confessor, or spiritual guide, furnishes him with a pretence to be tête à tête with his mistress as long as he pleases; and the husband durst not interrupt their conversation without running the risque of feeling the fatal effects,

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not only of the indignation of Heaven, but of that of the monks too.

Thou wilt perhaps ask me, dear Monceca, how the jealous Spaniards can put up with these monkish visits? I was as much surpriz'd at it as thou canst be, till I perceiv'd that the force of prejudice was so great over the people of this country, that their jealousy truckled to their superstition; either from their being persuaded of the virtue of the monks that frequent their houses, or from their opinion, that the cuckoldom for which they are oblig'd to those very monks, is sacred and honourable, and a constituent part of their religion. Perhaps too, there's a certain number of indulgences, which are tack'd to the horns of a husband who is made a cuckold by a friar. If that be the case, I no longer wonder that a poor Spaniard is so zealous as to gain them at the expence of his forehead, when a Spanish grandee guards a Jew to the place of execution, and for that purpose so demeans himself, as to be a comrade of the familiars of the inquisition.

This is not the first age wherein people have been known to receive cuckoldom, when it came thro' the canal of religion, with great marks of veneration. Did not the pagans think themselves very happy when some of their gods took a fancy to frolic it upon the earth, and to plant horns on certain husbands foreheads? This frontlet they reckon'd as honourable as a crown. Amphitryon, the Theban general, thought himself highly honour'd that Jupiter would make use of his wife to form a demi-god*. Perhaps a Spanish votary is as well pleased to be the bye-blow of some Augustin or Cordelier friar, as a Theban was to be descended from a pagan deity.

Vol. III.

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* Alcmena wore three moons on her head-dress, to denote that Jupiter made one night as long as three, that he might the longer enjoy her. 'This is something very odd,' says a modern author. 'It was enough for her surely that her husband's head was charg'd with such a crest, and fortify'd with horn-works and half-moons enough to surpass the towers of the goddess Cybele.'

Qualis.

Besides the liberty which the monks are indulg'd in, to go and converse with the women, and the respect which the husbands bear to them, the expedients which they make use of to conceal their intrigues, their knavery, and their hypocrisy, are of very great service to them. There's not a bad step they take in gallantry, but they bring themselves cleverly off; for they so well know how to disguise their actions, that many people are persuaded they are as chaste as Origen; tho' the same reason does not restrain them.

I was told a story of a Carmelite, which I thought a very merry one. This friar had an amour at Seville, with a very pretty young woman, whose husband being gone on a journey, the reverend father director did not fail to pay a visit to the fair one every morning. The exhortation he gave her were much more agreeable to the laws of love than to those of hymen; and that he might be the better understood by his patient, he lay in the same bed with her; where he commonly pass'd, at least, two or three hours at a time.

But one day as he was using this freedom with his mistress, who should come in but the husband! The Carmelite was so surpriz'd, that he had but just time to put on his gown, and left his breeches. The husband happen'd not to be of the temper of those who think monkish cuckoldom an effectual means for the remission of sins. While the monk was thus hurry-

—Qualis, Berecynthia Mater.

Invehitur curru Phrygias turrita per urbes.

Virg. Aeneid. lib. vi. v. 185.

—When in pomp she makes the Phrygian round,
With golden turrets on her temples crown'd. Dryden.
• What need then had she to bear three moons on her forehead?

—Parvoque Alcmena superbit

Hercule, tergemina crinem circumdata Luna,

Stat. Thebaid. lib. vi. v. 288.

With little Hercules Alcmena swells,

Her head encompas'd with a triple moon.

• Several interpreters will have it, that these three moons were the signals of the three nights that Jupiter spent with her. Bayle's Hist. and Critic. Dict. in the article of Amphitryon.

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ing on his habit, the man perceiv'd the breeches ; and snatching in a rage at the dumb, but convincing testimonials, he shut them up in a chest, and ran to the convent, to carry his complaint to his superior : ‘ I will this minute, said he to him, go and shew father Sebastiano’s breeches to the whole city, if you don’t make me proper and speedy satisfaction.’ I promise you I will, said the superior to him, very gravely ; but it is necessary I should speak first to the father of whom you complain ; for I can’t condemn him unheard ; ’tis but equity that I should hear both parties : Therefore go your ways home ; and if you have justice on your side, you shall have satisfaction.’

The Spaniard had no sooner left the superior, but father Sebastiano return’d to the convent. It was to no purpose for him to deny the fact ; for the loss of his breeches was an evident token of his crime. The superior, a crafty man, perceiving the danger of leaving such convincing proofs of the incontinency of one of his friars in the hands of the jealous Spaniard, resolv’d to have the fatal breeches again forthwith. Don’t be so lecherous for the future, said he to father Sebastiano, nor so delicate, as to put yourself in a pair of sheets. ’Tis unworthy of a Carmelite to have recourse to such means.

After he had ended this short remonstrance, he order’d the whole convent to march in procession, to the husband’s house. They obey’d, and follow’d him singing their litanies. The Spaniard, very much surpriz’d at the arrival of all those reverend fathers, could not conceive what was the meaning of so much ceremony ; but it was not long before he was acquainted with it. “ We are come, said the superior to him, to let you see your mistake, and to fetch one of the most precious relics of our convent, which father Sebastiano took from the sacristy, or vestry, without my order.”

The Spaniard did not understand one word of what was said to him ; nor could he guess what relic they meant. His passion had prevented him from seeing

his wife since he return'd from the convent; and he was very far from suspecting what a trick they were going to play him. ‘The breeches continued the superior, which you have shut up in your chest, and which are the cause of your mistake, are the same that were worn by the blessed St. Raymond de Penafort. Father Sebastian only brought them from the convent, that your wife might salute them: For of all relics, ‘tis the greatest specific for women that pray to heaven for children.’ At these words the Spaniard, out of his respect for the sacred breeches, or rather out of madness, to find himself imposed upon without daring to complain, or to take satisfaction, prostrated himself before the relic, and cry'd out with a loud voice; ‘O holy breeches! from which we have all the reason that can be to expect a posterity as numerous as the stars in the firmament, or as the sand of the sea; forgive my blindness, and take pity of my ignorance! I did not know that thou who hadst heretofore provided for the infirmities of a great saint, didst vouchsafe at this time so graciously to supply the pressing demands of our wives. May all the wives of this city immediately experience thy powerful assistance as effectually as mine has.’

The superior, charm'd with a homage and prayer which gave so much credit to his brethren, and with the blessed success of his monkish stratagem, carry'd back St. Raymond’s breeches in triumph to his convent: And the superstitious Spaniards, fully convinc’d of their wonderful efficacy, have ever since paid particular devotion to them*.

There are few cases, dear Monceca, wherein the Nazarene monks don’t make religion a cloak to cover their irregularities. Not that they trouble their heads about salving appearances, or avoiding scandal. The fear of forfeiting the good opinion which the

* I have been assur’d, that such an adventure happen’d once in France, only it concern’d a Jesuit, and his breeches were canonized by the name of St. Anthony.

husbands have conceiv'd of them, is the only thing that puts them under a constraint. They conceal the wickedness they commit, not because they are ashame'd of it, but that they may commit it with the more ease: And it must be confess'd, that nobody excels them in the art of dissimulation.

A famous Italian preacher* made excellent sermons at Rome; but when he came down from the pulpit, his practice was to go and divert himself with the kind lasses. Nobody would have thought of correcting him for his intemperance, if he had not had a number of very formidable enemies, who were resolv'd to be reveng'd on him for certain bold invectives with which he lash'd them in his public discourses. One day as he was preaching at St. John de Lateran's, 'my dear brethren, said he, I have no notion of those men who boast themselves to be of the society of Jesus, when he was born, he had no other companions but an ox and an ass. he spent his life with Scribes and Pharisees, whom he could never convert; and at last he dy'd between two thieves. Therefore, dear brethren, for God's sake, tell me, from which of these three classes are those deriv'd, that call themselves the society of Jesus † ?'

So severe a jest as this was, turn'd the hatred of the jesuits upon the preacher: they swore they would be even with him; and having intelligence that, every now and then he frequented certain houses, where 'twas impossible for him to compose his sermons; they obtain'd an order from the governor of Rome to the barigel to arrest the preacher, and to carry him to prison, when he caught him with his whores.

* Fontana Rosa. He was a Dominican, and a great enemy of the Jesuits.

† Fratelli carissimi, non so, disse, chi siano costoro, che si pregiano di esser i Compagni di Giesu. All' ora che nacque, non ebbe altri Compagni che un Bue ed un Asino. Passò la Vita tra Farisei e Scribi; i quali mai vollero convertirsi. Morì alla fine in mezzo a due Ladri. Dite-mi, di grazia. Fratelli cari, la Compagni di Giesu d'oggidi da quel di queste tre Compagnie deriva? Sig. Cant. de Quom. Tom. I. p. 130.

The Jesuits kept a strict watch upon him ; and no sooner was their enemy gone out upon the rake, than they inform'd the barigel of it; who enter'd the house, and knock'd at the chamber-door : but the reverend father, instead of opening it, began to talk aloud, as if he did not hear or mind who was at the door. The barigel, tir'd with waiting, burst open the door with his foot, and enter'd the chamber with his archers. But how was he surpriz'd when he found the monk with a chaplet in his hand, at the end of which there hung above two hundred medals, and the priestess of Venus kneeling at his feet, modestly attending to a sermon that was preaching to her by the fly monk, and saying to him, with a flood of tears; “ indeed, father, I will, for the time to come, reform my course of life and nothing shall engage me to continue a behaviour which I confess to be so bad.”

The barigel and his archers, not a whit less superstitious than all the Italians are, cry'd out; “ is it not a shame that good men should be accus'd in this manner ?” The monk perceiving that now was the time to play his enemies that trick which they intended to put upon him, did not think it enough to have held forth to his mistress , but he gave so pathetic an exhortation to the barigel, that instead of thinking how he should put the orders which he had received in execution, he went and acquainted the governor of Rome with the holy and pious actions of which he had just been an eye-witness. The Jesuits were mortify'd and ashame'd, and the preacher was more followed than ever. He was permitted to convert as many whores as he thought fit, to closet himself with them, tete à tête, in order to talk to them with the more freedom, and even to strip off his habit, if he pleas'd, or if he thought it might conduce to the multiplication of his converts. The Jesuits complain'd of the privileges granted to their enemy ; but all the answer they had, was, that it was no more than what was taught by the Spanish divines ; and that their

their fathers, Escobar, Sanches, Suarez, and many others, had often decided those points*.

I know not, dear Monceca, what thou wilt think of this stratagem of the Italian preacher: But in this country there happen every day fifty scenes still more comical; and the Italian monks are saints, compar'd with the Spaniards.

Nevertheless, whatever conveniency a woman finds in an intrigue with a monk, and be the friars ever so much in vogue here; yet a certain instinct, born with the fair sex, is the reason that they are never admitted but when a woman is at a loss where to find a gentleman for her gallant. When this is the case, she throws herself into the arms of the friars; and this is commonly owing to nothing but the constraint she is put under.

The ceremony of making love by monks and by gentlemen, is very different. The former enter houses, and often turn the husbands out. The gentlemen, on the contrary, dance attendance in the street, playing upon the guitar under their mistresses windows. Of the latter I will give thee a fuller account another time.

Farewel, dear Aaron; and bless thy stars that thou art in a country where there are no monks, and no inquisition.

* See the Provincial Letters, p. 101. Also the Parallel of the Doctrine of the Pagans and the Jesuits: Translated into English, and dedicated to the right reverend father in God Dr. Benjamin Hoadley, now lord bishop of Winchester.

LETTER CXII.

Moncea's observations on the various changes in the Christian religion.—He apprehends some extraordinary revolution must happen in it.—The people generally fall in with the establish'd religion of a kingdom.—Great revolutions in government, occasioned by changes in religion.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Amsterdam.—

THE present state of the Nazarene religion often makes me think, dear Isaac, what it will come to 4 or 500 years hence, it being certain, that in so long a course of time some great revolution must happen, which will intirely change the face of it.

Nazarenism may be look'd upon at present as a republic, distracted by two different factions, which can never be at peace with one another; for the one or the other must necessarily get the upper hand, and suppress its rival. The Roman pontiff's friends, and their adversaries, labour with the same passion to accomplish their designs; and 'tis impossible but some favourable conjuncture and opportunity will happen, which the one of the two parties will improve to the ruin of the other.

When one considers with what rapidity the reformed extended their power at the beginning of the separation of the Nazarenes, and what a number of kingdoms and provinces have embrac'd the sentiments of the protestant doctors, one would be ready to think, that by little and little they would become absolute master. But if we cast our eyes upon the events that have happen'd in Europe for this hundred years past, one knows not what to think. The more one seeks to attain to a certainty in these matters, the more uncertain we are, and reflections only

only serve to breed new doubts. Many good and bad turns of success have happen'd, alternately, to the protestants and papists. In the beginning of the last century near one half of France was protestant: And now Calvinism is intirely banish'd from it, which is a considerable gain to the partisans of the pontiff; but what they have got on their own side of the water they have lost beyond sea. The English have intirely banish'd popery, and it daily loses ground in the two kingdoms that are subject to them*. 'Tis my opinion that the injury the two parties have done to one another is pretty equal, tho' the advantage does not appear so equal in Germany, where the protestants seem to have met with a considerable shock, the consequences of which may be very pernicious to them, by the Saxon Electors changing their religion, and their returning to the Romish communion. They have introduc'd the sentiments of the papists into their government and their court. They have, as one may say, laid the axe to the root of the tree, and it must fall. For, in fine, dear Isaac, 'tis a fact which has been demonstrably prov'd true by experience, that when a succession of sovereigns continue in the profession of the same religion, all their subjects, sooner or later, embrace its opinion. In Sweden and in Denmark, where the kings have exercised the protestant religion without interruption, there are scarce any catholics now to be found; and there would have been as few of them in England, if, after the reign of queen Elizabeth, there had been no popish prince on the throne. But James the first, and his son, rekindled a fire that was ready to go out.

If Lewis XIII. and Lewis XIV. had been as zealous to destroy popery, as they were to ruin the protestant religion, the number of the reformed in France, would have been much greater than that of the catholics, and perhaps there would not have been a single nobleman remaining at court in the interest

* Scotland and Ireland.

of the sovereign pontiff. 'Tis impossible but, in the course of four generations, there will arise, in all families, some head or other of it, that will sacrifice the faith of his ancestors to his ambition. If the grandfather does not change, the father does; if not the father, the son does, or the son's successor. 'Tis undoubtedly a very great complaisance to mankind to think that there is only one out of four that is capable of committing folly, for the sake of procuring them great wealth and honours. All the philosophers own that men are in general more prone to vice than virtue. But supposing them to be much more firm and stable than they are, it will always follow, that in the course of four generations there must be some chief or head in every family, that will act solely from the views of ambition and policy. ' My prince, he will say, believes in the virtue of indulgences. And after all is said and done, where is the harm if I approve of the use of those indulgences? I must be a very stupid fool not to be of the religion of the sovereign, because that's the road to a fortune. Shall I be very happy, if, by continuing a protestant, I have the satisfaction to condemn fooleries, which, if I do, will be neverthe less approv'd? Is it not better that I should cunningly make use of those fooleries to attain to my own ends? Henry IV. who was born to wear a crown, said, A Kingdom was worth a Mass at any time. As for my part, I, who am only born to attain to the honours set apart for nobility, do affirm, that a regiment is worth all the spiritual tid-bits of the Romish faith, whether by wholesale or retail.'

A duke and a peer is as easy to be tempted as a private gentleman. There needs nothing more than to flatter him with the hopes of obtaining a place that may give fresh lustre to his rank. How few courtiers would there be at Versailles, whose faith could be steady against the prospect of the staff of a marshal of France?

In order to be fully convinc'd, that the religion of a prince, sooner or later, absorbs all others, one need only consider how many illustrious families that profess'd protestantism in France, in the reign of Henry IV. as the Rhoans, the Bouillons, the la Forces, the Gondrins, and several others, are since relaps'd into the catholic religion. Is this change owing to the power of grace? A Jansenist parson may be prejudic'd enough to believe so; but a Jesuit will reason upon it more justly. He will by word of mouth, indeed, ascribe to heaven what his heart tells him is owing to policy. He too well knows the secret springs of politics, to be impos'd upon by the sudden conversions that were made at court, in the reigns of Lewis XIII. and Lewis XIV.

The protestants, dear Isaac, are as ambitious as the papists, and by consequence as subject to change, for the sake of feeding their vanity. As in France there is no protestant family of distinction remaining, so neither nor in Sweden nor in Denmark is there any to be found that is catholic. The religion of the sovereign has operated equally in these different kingdoms, and it will every where produce the same effect.

The protestants cannot but look upon the election of Augustus to the kingdom of Poland as a fatal stroke, because it has introduc'd opinions into that prince's territories, which, sooner or later, will acquire the same credit there as in other catholic countries. 'Tis almost impossible but some day or other an elector of Saxony will arise so zealous for religion, that he will endeavour to give the finishing blow to the protestant faith. I consider the prince that now reigns in Saxony, in the same light as Henry IV. with regard to religion; and his son, perhaps, will resemble Lewis XIII. and his grandson Lewis XIV. which if they should, what will become of the reformed religion? Before the fourth generation, it will have suffer'd the same fate in this part of Germany as it hath met with in the Palatinate, and in the bishopric of Spire.

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By the several losses which the protestants have sustain'd for some time in Germany, and which I don't find counterbalanc'd by any unfortunate accident which has happen'd to the papists, it seems, dear Isaac, as if the latter may, by degrees, get the upperhand, and regain the whole, or at least a great part of all that they have lost. They once had in their power a very useful and a very certain method to attain to it; but state-policy, and the interest of the princes, did not permit them to put it in practice. If the court of Vienna had but chose a husband for the eldest archdutches, out of the protestant princes, there is not one of them but what would have said, that the kingdom of Hungary and Bohemia, and the dominions of Austria and Silesia, were worth all the high masses that ever were, or ever will be fung. Suppose now, dear Isaac, that the prince royal of Prussia had but been in possession of what the duke of Lorrain has obtain'd, the catholic religion would have been restor'd in Prussia and in Brandenbourg, where it would have become the religion of the state, the path to honours, and by consequence, the religion, which would have been quickly embrac'd by the courtiers, by all persons of ambition, and, before the fourth generation, by every family of distinction.

While I am writing to thee, dear Moncea, a very odd thought is come into my head. If the papists knew how to make a cunning use of their advantages, with only the kingdom of Poland they might, in less than 200 years, render all the courts in Germany submissive to the orders of the Roman pontiff. They need do no more for this purpose than to render that elective state the inheritance of some protestant prince that should turn catholic. After having gain'd Saxony, the crown should be offer'd to the king of Denmark; and when he is dead, they should elect the king of Sweden. Thus, in the space of a couple of centuries, it would appear, that Poland would be worth, in church coin, seven or eight times more than France is worth; Henry IV. having rated his kingdom at no higher value than a single mass.

'Tis

'Tis certain, that in the elections of the empire, and of Poland, the papists have too great opportunities to aggrandize themselves, which, sooner or later, they will make use of to advantage. They have already found the benefit of the first. Why should they not hereafter make use of the second? What does not happen in two centuries, may come about in three. Fifty years ago it would have been taken as a wild prophecy, if a man should have asserted that Saxony would be soon govern'd by a catholic prince, and Poland by an elector, who was but a little while before a protestant. In our days we have seen all these events. We actually look upon it as an improbable thing, to suppose that a king of Prussia will be a papist and an emperor? but our great-grand children will not perhaps be surpriz'd at it.

The reformed have not the same advantages as their adversaries. They have not one elective kingdom among them? nor can they hope to bring any sovereign into their party by the view of possessing a second crown. All they can do is to secure to themselves the peaceable possession of certain dominions, which can have nothing to do with the elections of sovereigns. Holland, the Swiss Cantons, the imperial protestant cities, will never be in the circumstance of kingdoms govern'd by princes. But what's so small a tract of country compar'd to that which is possess'd by so many protestant kings, who may be tempted, by the offer of a crown, to embrace the catholic religion?

All these reasons convince me, dear Isaac, that notwithstanding the amazing progress which the protestant religion made in its beginning, it may hereafter, by degrees, lose all its advantages, and be reduced to a very low ebb. The detriment which it has suffer'd in France and Germany, seems to me to be greater than that which has been done to popery in England. The change of the religion of the electors of Saxony turns the scale on the side of the catholics; and I don't see how their adversaries can repair this shock. 'Tis true that they are still very

powerful ; but in short, there are certain conjectures, when all the power of men is of no avail. If it should but happen that one sovereign in the North should change his religion, the affairs of the protestant religion in Germany would be in a very bad state. Perhaps this may not happen ; I grant it. In this case, the reformed would still be in a condition to make head against their enemies. Perhaps, on the other hand, there may be such a change ; the consequence of which would be, that the papists will intirely gain the ascendant.

I think, therefore, dear Isaac, that I may well observe to thee, that reflections on what may be the state of the Nazarene religion, in three or four centuries, are only productive of doubts. 'Tis time alone that must clear up so impenetrable a mystery. Who knows whether, two hundred years hence, France, instead of thinking how to protect the Roman pontiff, will not oppose him, and entertain opinions different from those of the papists, and those of the reformed too ? Who can foretel whether some new opinion may not be in vogue ? The disputes that arise every day among the popish divines are of the same service to the protestant, as the ambition of obtaining an elective kingdom is to the catholic religion. Nature has not forgot how she form'd the brains of the first reformers. She has nothing to do but at certain conjectures to produce so great a genius in France as Calvin's was, who would do more damage to popery than the conversion of two protestant princes could repair.

Farewell, dear Isaac ; and live content and happy.

LETTER CXIII.

Onis's answer to the preceding letter, who is of opinion that some dangerous revolution will probably happen in the christian religion.—His reason for it.—Poland would have exercised the Lutheran religion at this time, if it had not been for Charles XII. of Sweden.—The Venetians secret enemies to the popish power.—Pope Innocent XI. partly the cause of banishing popery from England.

ISAAC ONIS TO AARON MONCECA.

Amsterdam.—

THIS, dear Monceca, is in answer to thy letter, on the uncertainty of the future state of Nazarenism. 'Tis highly probable that before two centuries are run out, very considerable changes will happen in the sects of that religion; but 'tis my opinion that popery has more reason to apprehend some dangerous revolution than protestantism. Thou seem'st to me to think the contrary; but, if thou dost advert to my reasons, I fancy thou wilt alter thy opinion, and plainly see, that the credit of the Roman pontiffs has not gained ground in Europe for these hundred years past; but that, on the contrary, it has sunk considerably; and that the court of Rome has less power now, than it had a little after the reformation.

The exile of the French protestants is not an equivalent for the total destruction of the catholics in England. The kings of France never were protestants; therefore, according to thy own principles, thou wilt confess to me, that protestantism in their government could not be considered as a religion that was like to make any great progress there in future times, since that of the prince must at the long run absorb and destroy all the others. The

reformed, after the death of Henry IV. might well have foreseen what they were to expect. Was it possible they could hold out so long against enemies that were supported by the credit and power of the sovereign? The English catholics, on the contrary, had all the reason in the world to hope for happy times. After the reigns of several protestant princes a popish prince was placed upon the throne, which was such a master-piece of state policy in their favour, that what might not they have hoped for in process of time? But matters took a sudden turn; for the prince on whom they founded their hopes was obliged to abandon his kingdom, and his subjects gave a sanction to his exile, by an authentic act, by which all princes that adhered to the faith of the Roman pontiff, were for ever excluded from the crown of England. Consider, dear Moncea, how much popery has suffered more than protestantism in these different revolutions. The reformed were banished out of a country where the prince on the throne was against them; and where, for a long time, their privileges had been intirely suppressed. The catholics were proscribed in three kingdoms where the sovereign protected them, where they hoped to bear sway by his credit, and where every thing seemed to concur, to grant them their most sanguine expectations. Besides, by the banishment of the French protestants, popery was not secured against the attacks of some new adversaries; whereas the reformed of England have raised invincible barriers against the attacks of the court of Rome. If a new sect starts up at London, either among the presbyterians, or in the church of England, it will never aim at the destruction of the protestant in favour of the popish religion. But, if any novel doctrine should come to be established in France, it will always tend to the destruction of the authority of the Roman pontiffs. Experience shews this to be true. The Jansenists, have succeeded in the place of the protestants; and, sooner or later, they

will

will come to have as great disputes with the court of Rome as the first reformers had.

Consider, dear Aaron, that every new sect which shall happen to start up hereafter must tend to the destruction of popery, and can do no prejudice to protestantism. Fifty years ago, or more, all the Dutch catholics had but one faith ; but now, they are divided into Molinists and Jansenists, by which separation popery has suffered very much, while protestantism has in some measure been a gainer.

Thou wilt say, perhaps, dear Moncea, that the protestants are subject to the same inconveniences as their adversaries ; and, that the new opinions which find a number of adherents among them, become very hurtful to them, because they diminish the number of such as stick to the fundamental articles of protestantism. But to this I answer, that the sects which arise in the protestant religion do it but little harm, because they are all agreed to stand up, and preach for the utter destruction of popery. Instead of aiming to persecute one another, they are attentive in the pursuit of ways and means to hurt the common enemy. The disciples of Luther, Calvin, Menno and Arminius are equally engaged in the same designs, and pursue, tho' by various ways, the same end. When the business in hand is to give a blow to popery, they unite together. The hatred of the Roman pontiff is the knot and cement of the several Nazarene sects ; but when any new one starts up in the popish religion, it immediately falls in with the sentiments of the others, so far as they tend to humbling the court of Rome.

The extravagant conduct of the catholic priests and doctors gives great advantage likewise to the protestants, and sooner or later will prove the entire ruin of popery. When any divisions are formed in the Romish religion, the pontiff immediately cuts off those from his communion whose opinions he does not like. There are few ages in which there are not such separations. The branches thus cut and torn off, make the tree less ; and by degrees

nothing will be left but the trunk, half rotten and incapable to shoot out new sprigs. The protestants act after a manner much more wise and prudent. They don't persecute the sects that are formed among them, but content themselves with not approving them; and by such moderation they hinder them from carrying things to those extremities, into which popery, by its cruelties, drives all those that arise in the pale of its church.

Those, dear Moncea, are my reasons for believing that protestantism has not so much cause as popery to fear the being destroyed in process of time. 'Tis true, that the objection which thou hast raised from the conversion of the protestant princes to the Romish communion, seems to counter-balance them. But if thou dost only run over the present state of the affairs of Europe, thou wilt see that this advantage of the catholics is not so considerable as that which the reformed may reap at some time or other from the victories of one single prince, an enemy to the Roman pontiff. Thou supposest, that by one election only to the crown of Poland, in the space of a hundred years, three different monarchs may be drawn into the Romish religion. I own that possibly this may be brought about. But who can give thee the same assurance, that some ages hence all Poland will not be protestant? Thou must not think it extraordinary, if I believe that 'tis possible for the authority of the Roman pontiff to be entirely destroyed by that time. 'Tis not much above 20 years ago that this same Poland, from whence thou dost now presage so much advantage to the papists, had like to have become Lutheran: And it might have been so at this day, had it not been for the vast ambition, and the mistaken politics of Charles XII. King of Sweden; who, after having made himself master of it, so as to be able to reduce it to a province, and join it to his other dominions, chose rather to venture a battle at Pultowa, and to lose the conquests of several years in one day, than to secure to himself the peaceable possession of the dominions

dominions which he had subdued. The absurd passion which that prince had to imitate Alexander, and to make kings after his example, made him place Stanislaus on the throne of Poland. The papists are therefore only obliged to the folly of a protestant prince for the preservation of that crown. A politician of these later times owns this truth, though he excuses Charles the twelfth, and extols his disinterestedness and magnanimity in yielding up a kingdom which belonged to him by right of conquest. ‘ When count Piper, says this author *, ‘ saw Charles the master of Poland, he proposed to ‘ him to keep it for him ; and after the example of ‘ Gustavus Vasa, to render it Lutheran. His view ‘ to indemnify himself for his expences, to aggrandize his kingdom, to extend his religion, and to ‘ be revenged on the Pope whose dominions he ‘ hated, made him hesitate a moment. But when ‘ he came to consider that he had declared to the ‘ Poles, that he had no design against their nation, ‘ and that all he wanted of them was to drive out ‘ king Augustus, and to elect another king, I will ‘ have no kingdom, said he, which I cannot keep ‘ to myself without breach of my promise ; and, ‘ upon this occasion, ’tis more honourable to give ‘ a crown than to keep it. I question whether the ‘ Czar ever entertained so noble a sentiment, to ‘ have the honour of keeping his promise upon such ‘ terms.’

Without considering, dear Moncea, whether this author had reason to commend the disinterestedness of Charles XII. I will make use of his last words, in proof of another advantage which the enemies of the Roman pontiff may one day gain over their adversaries. He frankly owns that if the Czar had been as much master of Poland, as Charles XII. was, he would not have scrupled to keep it for himself, and would have joined it to the other provinces

* The political works of the Abbe de St. Pierre, Tom. ix.
P. 35.

of Muscovy. Who knows what may happen in a few ages? We already see that the Muscovites give kings to the Poles. Why will they not think it proper hereafter to subdue them intirely? The power of the Muscovites will sooner or later do considerable prejudice to popery, in the dominions that border upon them. It cannot be denied, that all the conquests they make increase the power of a nation, which is a mortal enemy to the court of Rome. The hatred of the protestants is flight, compared with that of the Nazarenes of the Greek faith. The Muscovites already give marks of their antipathy to the Roman pontiff. The Czarina vigorously solicits the emperor in favour of the reformed Hungarians, and in policy he should not refuse her what she demands. The reformed have, on a sudden, acquired powerful friends in the North. Forty years ago, the Muscovites seemed to be as insignificant, and as much out of the question, in the disputes betwixt the catholics and the protestants, as the quakers are at this day. Who can foresee what new accidents may give other allies to the reformed? They are sure, that the ambition and tyranny of the court of Rome will conduce to raise them friends, and even in their own pale. What an illustrious poet has said of antient Rome, may be applied to the modern city.

— Ce n'est point au bout de l'univers
Que Rome fait sentir tout le poids de ses fers :
Et, de près inspirant les haines les plus fortes,
Tes plus fiers ennemis, Rome, sont à tes portes *.

'Tis my opinion, that the Venetians may be ranked among those secret enemies, who only preserve a decorum out of policy. How many other people are there, who submitting in appearance to the Roman pontiff, are always on the watch to guard against his incroachments? They dissemble, because they think it for their interest. But if this

* Racine, in the tragedy of Mithridates, Act III.

interest

interest should cease, if it should take a new turn, with what joy would not they entirely shake off a yoke, which for so long a time has seemed insupportable to them?

'Tis not only by indirect means, and without knowing it, that the court of Rome helps to propagate the protestant religion, but it sometimes lends assistance to it voluntarily. The personal interests of the pontiffs sometimes prevail over the obligations and duties of their rank. Several of them have publicly favoured the reformed. Innocent XI. was partly the cause of the abolishing of popery in England, and of the banishment of king James. If two or three pontiffs were acted by the same domestic and political interests as he was, what would become of popery, if the protestants at the same time made an artful improvement of their advantages? They honestly own the advantages which the hatred of Innocent XI. to the French procured them. 'The king, says an author of their communion*, wrote a letter to the cardinal d'Etrees, which was communicated to the cardinals, wherein he complained of this pope's conduct, and took particular notice of the prejudice which Europe and the church might suffer by what the pope had done against the cardinal de Furstemberg. To this partiality he ascribed the measures that were formed against king James, in favour of the protestant religion, &c. This letter, when made public in Rome, was perhaps, another motive to induce the Pope to favour prince Clement of Bavaria more and more, in prejudice of the cardinal de Furstemberg. But by the exclusion of his eminence, he took a hundred-fold revenge, for all the affronts which he might have received. He deprived the king of France of the advantage of being the arbiter of peace and war, and engaged him in a necessary war with almost all Europe. He quickly saw the effect of this conduct; and, tho' he did not

* Bayle's Historical Dictionary : The article of Innocent XI.

long

' long survive his taking such a dreadful revenge,
 ' yet he liv'd long enough to have the joy of seeing
 ' France attack'd by so many enemies, that it was
 ' generally believ'd, she must have funk as into an
 ' abyss the very first campaign.'

After thou hast reflected, dear Monceca, on the conduct of Innocent XI. examine that of Sixtus Quintus, who publickly favour'd the interests of Henry IV. and Elizabeth, to the prejudice of those of Philip II. and thou wilt be convinc'd that 'tis not impossible for the protestants to obtain powerful help, from the Roman pontiffs, for their preservation and even aggrandisement.

Farewell, dear Monceca ; live content and happy ; and let me hear from thee.

LETTER CXIV.

Some farther reflections on the changes that may possibly happen in the Christian religion.---Isaac Onis is of opinion, that popery will lose ground as the sciences are cultivated.---Some indignities offered by pope Gregory VII. to the Emperor Henry IV---Some instances wherein women have occasioned a change in a national religion.

ISAAC ONIS, to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo.---

SINCE my last, dear Monceca, I have made some new reflections upon the changes that may possibly happen in Nazarenism ; and I think that I have discover'd new reasons which very much favour my opinion. The love that the laity have for the sciences, the contempt into which the philosophy of the schools is fallen, as well as the orders of the monks, who were formerly the only keepers of books and MSS. all these things concur unanimously to the destruction of the credit of the court of Rome.

'Twas

'Twas by the favour of ignorance and superstition that the Roman pontiffs establish'd their power. The blind people effectually kiss'd the chains that were put upon them. But now the return of the sciences has taken off the bondage, and the truth appears again with lustre. The laity, having seen the folly of their fathers, will not be, as they were, the bubbles of ecclesiastic and monkish jugglers. The first instant wherein ignorance began to lose its perrogatives, ought to be look'd upon as the fatal moment, wherein it was decreed by heaven that the court of Rome should be humbled. Since the laity have made use of the talents which the Divine Being bestows upon all mankind, and since they have been convinc'd, that as the understanding is the most glorious appanage of the human nature, 'twas preferring the state of beasts to that of men, not to cultivate the sciences ; superstition, the power of the pontiffs, and the tricks of their tools, lose credit every day. Men, being prejudic'd against the stratagems that were formerly made use of to deceive them, can no longer be so easily led by the nose. Before they can swallow an oath, they must have time to chew it ; and it often happens that they reject it as contrary to reason, and the rules of equity. In former ages a pontiff gave a sanction to all his passions by covering them with the veil of religion ; and the people look'd upon them as the effects of a pious zeal. Hildebrand [pope Gregory VII.] oblig'd the Emperor Henry IV. to appear before him after a week of fasting and imprisonment, in the humble attitude of a malefactor. But now a-days we see that the writings of a pontiff, which contain any thing injurious to the persons or the memory of sovereigns, are stigmatiz'd and condemn'd to the flames.

Thou must observe, dear Moncea, that the ruin of the power of the court of Rome advances slower or faster, according as the sciences have been more or less cultivated by the laity. In former times, when some began already to be distinguish'd by their learning, Boniface VIII. would fain have imitated

Hildebrand,

Hildebrand, but he miscarry'd in his projects. Philip the Fair mortify'd him upon sundry occasions, and made his embassador insult him on the pontifical throne. When learning gain'd fresh vigor under Francis I and all Europe began to cultivate it, the Emperor Charles V. added contempt to insult; for he order'd prayers to God throughout his dominions for the deliverance of a pope, at the same time that he kept him prisoner in the castle of St. Angelo. At last, Lewis XIV. carry'd matters further than any other monarch; he caus'd a lasting monument to be set up in the middle of Rome, of his contempt of the Roman pontiffs; and by erecting a pyramid, he reveng'd the many insults made upon the honour of all the crown'd heads.

Mean time, the sovereigns, who have so cruelly mortify'd the pontiffs, pretended to be very zealous for Nazarenism. Judge therefore, dear Aaron, what other sovereigns might be capable of doing against popery, were they once fully convinc'd that the power of the court of Rome is directly contrary to the fundamental articles of the Nazarane religion.

Since 'tis to the return of learning that princes have been oblig'd for the right which they have acquir'd of defending themselves against the insults of the clergy, it may be laid down for a certain principle, that the more learned the laity become, the more will the phantom of popery vanish; and in a short time it will make no impression but upon the minds of silly women and idiots.

Heretofore, if the pontiffs did but dispense with the subjects oath of allegiance to the sovereigns, it was enough to raise a rebellion in the most tranquil states; for the credulous Nazaranes imagin'd, that when a kingdom was put under an interdict, and a king was excommunicated, Heaven would roar in thunder, and dart all its bolts, upon wretched mortals that were so presumptuous as to resist God's vicegerent. But now, people are not only convinc'd that the thunder of the Vatican never hurts anybody's health, but even the French, and several other nations

nations maintain, with very great warmth, that the Roman pontiffs have no right to excommunicate kings. If they durst now but attempt what they perform'd in past ages, with so much ease and success, the subjects themselves, without the princes seeming to interest themselves in the offence, would punish the rashness of the court of Rome. ‘ If it had happen'd, says Pasquier†, that the Pope, out of spite, should lay the king and his kingdom under an interdict, in order to expose it as a prey to the first occupier, tho' we were at liberty to appeal from him to a future council; yet, without involving ourselves in perplexities, and making choice of the shortest way, the appeal against the abuse may remedy it, as being an undertaking enter'd upon, not only against the sacred decrees, but against the express word of God which is stronger, and by which he declares that the spiritual jurisdiction shall have no power over the temporal. To make short of the matter, we may, by these models, be arm'd against all incroachments that may be made by the court of Rome, in prejudice of the king, or the ordinaries, and even against the dispensations themselves, when it appears, that through surreptitious practices the holy see has been impos'd upon, and that they redound more to the destruction than to the edification of the church. Otherwise, said Gerson. ’tis not using the fulnes of power, but fully abusing its power.’

I should be apt to think, dear Moncea, that it would have been dangerous, I don't say to an ordinary prince, but even to a formidable sovereign, to explain himself in the language that Pasquier did, in the pontificate of Hildebrand; and yet, here's a mere private man, who declares his thoughts in public. The magistrates go further; they authorize them, and there's not a single counsellor of the parliament but has a hundred times more power over the court of Rome than the emperor Henry IV. had.

† *Recherches de la France*, lib. iii. cap. xxxiv. p. 28.
Vol. III. G It

It must be confess'd, therefore, that from the reign of that unfortunate monarch to this time, the power of popery is diminish'd, at least equally to the disproportion that there is between the credit of a mere judge and that of a sovereign.

I grant, dear Moncea, that there are certain junctures, when the power of the Roman pontif seems to gather strength, and gives a blaze which alarms people with the fears of a fire not yet extinguis'h'd; and which, by being latent under the ashes, is only the more dreadful. But these flying sparks are the last efforts of a flame, which having no more matter to consume, is forc'd to go out for want of nourishment, superstition and ignorance being the only combustibles that kept it alive. All efforts by the friends of the court of Rome will be in vain. They cannot support a building whose foundation trembles so that 'tis ready to tumble with the least shock. The props with which they endeavour to support it, only put off its fall a little while longer. The divisions and disturbances which the Jesuits have caus'd in France for many years, are much more prejudicial than they are favourable to popery. The disputes concerning the authority of the Roman pontiffs do but serve the more to open peoples eyes and by consequence to destroy that authority. There are some things which suffer infinitely by being look'd into; and of this kind are those affairs that relate to the court of Rome. It never enter'd into peoples heads to dive into the bottom of them, till they had lost their reputation. If the see of Rome had never endeavour'd to get that constitution receiv'd, which makes such a noise at this time; and if it had always kept the theological disputes from the cognizance of the laity, the several parties into which France is now divided, would have consisted only of a few hot-headed clergymen, ready to go together by the ears. But they were resolv'd to drag the laity into a quarrel, which to them was absolutely indifferent. The pontiffs really believ'd that they should find dupes among them, ever ready to adopt

them

their whimsies. To render the Jansenists odious, they attempted to restrain private men from having any correspondence with men who they said main-tain'd errors. The French, who had too often trusted to the court of Rome, to take its word any longer, enquir'd whether what they were told was true. The consequence of this inquiry has been the very reverse of what the pontiffs expected. Three fourths of the kingdom have embrac'd the opinions which the court of Rome was for condemning, and which mere burghers would never have entertain'd, if their curiosity had not been excited to examine them.

The pains which the advocates of the see of Rome take to remedy these evils are to no purpose. They may indeed carry their point for a while, so far as to humble these new enemies of the pontiffs, but they are too numerous to be destroy'd. When they have recover'd fresh strength, and repair'd the evils which they have suffer'd, they will, sooner or later, appear with more assurance and intrepidity than before: And if they don't take the field by the same name, and under the same standard, they will always be animated by the same spirit. Admit, that in ten years time Jansenism should be destroy'd in Paris, yet it must be more than two centuries before that hatred would abate which the inhabitants have conceiv'd against the pontiffs. Besides, who knows but this hatred may some time or other have the authority of the sovereign? Is it so very difficult a matter to render a king of France an enemy to the court of Rome? A slight quarrel with that court; a favour refus'd which 'twas in that court's power to have granted; love, in short, that deity which conquers all obstacles, may in a moment remove those which seem to hinder the separation of the French from the Romish communion. A Jansenist mistress, or one that will countenance any novel opinion, will do that in an instant which could not be accomplish'd in several centuries. Observe, dear Moncea, that almost all new sects are oblig'd to the women for their aggrandisement. What ob-

ligations had not protestantism to queen Margaret? What advantage did it not reap from Henry VIIIth's quarrel with the court of Rome about Anne of Bullen? Who knows but a hundred years hence, if not sooner, some French lady, the favourite of her king, and an advocate for some new opinions, may cause the same revolutions in France as we have known to happen in so many different countries? At a time when it was least of all expected, and affairs were suppos'd to be in the most tranquil and secure state that could be, who would have thought that this same Henry VIII. (Who not thinking it sufficient to defend popery by his royal authority, was resolv'd to do it in the character of a private man, and to take up the pen and turn author) would become afterwards the most cruel enemy of popery, and set his kingdom free for ever from the authority of the pontiffs?

Farewell, dear Moncea; and live content and happy.

LETTER CXV.

A description of the city of Berlin.---Manners of the people.---Germans, ancestors of the French.---Lutheranism mostly exercis'd at Berlin.---Character of the German writers.---Some very good historians, and philosophers, but no good poets.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

Berlin-----

WHEN I arriv'd at Berlin, dear Isaac, I was not a little surpriz'd to find Jeremiah Plozfs, whom thou didst know many years at Constantinople, and who, by the death of his father, has been oblig'd to come to Germany. He has lost a part of his estate, the same having been with-held from him, under colour of certain pretended misdemeanors which he was accus'd of being guilty of in the direction of the household of a rich gentleman, to whom he was a steward. This is a trick pretty com-

mon

mon in this country, where the expedient is very often made use of to take an advantage of the labour and toil of some unfortunate Israelite.

Jeremiah Plozfs has shew'd me all the remarkable at Berlin. This city has a distinguish'd rank among the fine towns of Europe ; its streets are spacious and airy ; the houses are built in a very good taste ; and their architecture is set off by their uniformity. The royal palace is very magnificent ; tho' 'tis not yet finish'd. The suburbs of Berlin vie with the city for beauty and grandeur ; but that of Frederickstadt surpasses all the others : The streets are as strait as a line, and of a considerable length.

The inhabitants of this country in general, resemble the other Germans in their manners. They are frank and honest, brave soldiers, and incapable of being prepossess'd in favour of one nation more than another ; for merit is dear to them wherever it is ; and 'tis the same thing to them to commend a foreigner as one of their own country, where their merit is equal. They look upon all men as form'd of the same clay. They believe, with reason, that to think, reflect, judge and draw consequences, is a privilege granted to every rational being ; and that men of sense ought to learn the good they find in any nation, without being so silly as to reject an excellent thing, and to seek to criticize it, because it was done on this or the other side of the Rhine. They leave the English in possession of such a ridiculous conceit, as to imagine that a man born at Dover is much more excellent than another born at Calais.

The Germans are the ancestors of the French, who are perhaps oblig'd to them for some part of what there is good in their manners. When I was at Paris, I saw more than one Frenchman who was strongly of this opinion ; and sure I am, that there are more of them who adopt it, than there are who reject it. What is very particular is, the sympathy there always was between the French and German nations, notwithstanding the bloody wars in which

they have been engag'd by their princes. Honour was always a much greater motive for their fighting than animosity; and whenever a peace put an end to their quarrels, they imitated the heroes of Homer, and gave each other mutual proofs of the reciprocal esteem they had for one another.

The Germans also acknowledge how welcome they are in France; and of this, several of their learned men have given public testimonies*.

The Nazarane religion which is exercised at Berlin, is the Lutheran. The Calvinist is profes'd there likewise; but 'tis not the religion that bears sway. One part of Germany separated a little above two hundred years ago from the communion of the Nazarene papists. 'Twas a certain monk, a man of great abilities †, who having taken some pique at the court of Rome, gave it that fatal blow; and the division which there was at the same time between several princes of the empire, was of extraordinary service to him; otherwise he would never have accomplish'd his designs; and all his eloquence would perhaps have been of no other service, than to draw the same fate upon him which had, some years before, hap-pend to Savonarola ‡.

The Germans really believe what they were taught in their youth, and don't trouble themselves with the inquiry, whether the doctrines of their re-

* See what M. Wallis says, in a work intituled, *Lutea Parisiorum erudita*, printed in 1722, at Nuremburg. Ingratissimus omnium quos terra unquam produxit hominum forem-nis, quod verum sit de Galliâ, five eam togatam, five sagatam, five etiam sacram, considero, dicerem nihil eâ ipsa dari elegan-tius, et societati hominum civili gratius; i. e. I should be the most ungrateful man that ever the earth bred, if I did not de-clare the truth of what I know concerning France, whether a-to the gentlemen of the long robe, or of the sword, or its clergy-viz. that there is not a nation in the world more polite, an-better turn'd for civil society.

† Luther.

‡ He was a Friar of the order of St. Dominic, who w-hang'd with a couple of his comrades at Florence, in 1498, for having preach'd against the irregularities of the court of Rome

ligion are true or false. They leave it to the French to waste their time in fruitless disputes ; and as to such as have abandoned the Romish communion, they have been forc'd to it by the monks, whose insolence and assurance were carried to such a pitch that the German good-nature could not brook it.

They who ascribe the conversion of the Germans to the learning and subtlety of their divines, know little of that nation. Syllogisms have scarce any effect upon them : Moreover, in the beginning of the troubles on account of the Nazarene religion, the papists were so ignorant, that learning was to them of no use.

The learned in Germany have publish'd several literary tracts that abound with things both curious and useful. But so voluminous are they, that it were to be wish'd they were to be cast into a crucible, and refin'd, by which means a part of them might come out the more useful. Certainly very good gold might be extracted from them ; and, on the other hand, a great deal of unprofitable allay might be separated from them, which very much diminishes the value of the precious metal wherewith they are mix'd.

There are great men however in this country ; and the universities abound with very good civilians and able physicians. The famous Puffendorf, author of the Law of Nature and Nations, and of several other works, deserves to be rank'd in the first class of learned men, and to be consider'd as the rival and competitor of the illustrious Grotius.

The Germans have also several good historians. 'Tis true, their style is sometimes diffuse, vague, and by consequence languid. The too great credit which they give to certain foreign authors, involves them also in another error, and hinders their distinguishing the truth from falsehood, especially when they treat of any other state but their own. The German sincerity can't conceive how 'tis possible for an historian to lye in the face of the whole world. It were therefore to be wish'd that some kind friend would

would charitably admonish them not to trust to the Spanish, Italian, English nor French writers till they have duly consider'd what degree of credit they deserve.

I could wish, for instance, that they would rely a good deal upon Thuanus, pretty much upon Mezeray, a little upon Daniel, but not at all upon Maimbourg and Varillas, and less, if it was possible, upon Jouvenci ; that of all the Italians they would trust no author but father Paul ; and that in order to form themselves to the majesty of history, they would read Davila, an excellent author, if he had said nothing of the pontiffs and the inquisition, and if he had but always made the truth as eminent, as his style was clear, and his reflections solid. I would have them consider all the Spanish histories, when they treat of things done in their own country, as the works of monks relating the annals of their convents. With some, every thing is a prodigy, and marvellous ; with others, every thing is a miracle, and an act of sacred devotion. The English, who are not so grave to outward appearance as the Spaniards, but every-whit as conceited, have a great number of declaimers, but not one historian. Having too rich an opinion of their own dear selves, they are not only unmerciful in their treatment of foreign nations, but even know not how to do justice to themselves, they are always so blinded by a spirit of party. A Jacobite historian places Mary Stuart among the greatest Nazarene saints, and does not scruple to erect a throne to her near that of the Divine Being. A Whig historian, on the contrary, after having publickly accus'd her of Debauchery, Adultery and murder, sends her without any ceremony to all the D---ls in H---, A certain Frenchman has wrote the history of England, and he has perform'd it so candidly, that the English have been oblig'd to adopt it as the best that had been ever written of their affairs. This is, undoubtedly much to the honour of the French writers ; but, unfortunately, a sudden stop has been put to this sort of triumph. Rapin Thoyras dy'd before

he finish'd his work, and other Frenchmen have added such a pitiful sequel to it, that they have done their own nation almost as much dishonour as the former had done it honour.

Among the antient German authors, Sleidan stands in a very distinguish'd rank. He wrote the history of the state of religion, and of the republic, under Charles V. The German papists indeed don't esteem this work quite so much as the German Lutherans do, but however they do it justice, and 'tis generally approv'd.

Among the moderns, Hubner has wrote almost as many volumes as Gregorio Leti; but he is of more use than that voluminous Italian, to whom the illustrious Bayle has ingeniously apply'd that verse of Virgil:

Tam ficti pravique tenax, quam nuncia veri.
i. e. Things done relates, not done he feigns,
And mingles truth with lies.*

Whatever talent Hubner had, he could not surmount those faults which are common to his nation. He falls sometimes into tedious and impertinent narrations. The too great credit which he gives, without distinction, to all foreign authors, has hinder'd him to be as exact as he might have been, if he had pleas'd to use more precaution. But that's the rock on which all compilers have split.

Seckendorff is a great man: He has wrote with a good deal of spirit, probity, candour and impartiality; but he is too prolix, and too diffuse. The illustrious Bayle, writing to a friend of his, gives this character of him: ‘ M. de Seckendorf’s answer to the Lutheranism of Maimbourg has been printed in two large volumes in folio. ’Tis a curious work but a very tedious one. ’Tis intituled, *Commentarius Historicus & Apologeticus de Lutheranismo adversus Maimburgium, &c†.*’

* Bayle’s Letters, Tom. I. p. 364.

† Bayle’s Letters, Tom. I. p. 364.

The genius of the Germans in general, which is not very sprightly, and their language, which is more proper to write tracts of learning and morality than pieces of eloquence and poetry, seem to be an argument why there are not and cannot be many poets and orators among them : Nevertheless, some they have : The best of those are Saxons, if we except one Brocks a Hamburgher, who passes for an excellent author. The Germans say, that the compositions of these poets are good and harmonious; but they have two ancient and powerful prejudices against them.

The first is founded upon the authority of Aristotle, who being born in a hot country, imagin'd that the genius of men that liv'd in cold countries could not be susceptible of much fire. But since experience has shewn us for some time past, that the authority of honest Aristotle was very weak ; and that the Nazarenes do no longer look upon his sentiments as articles of faith ; this prejudice may be look'd upon as very false.

The second is founded upon the little figure which their poets make in Europe. As to this, I should think it confirm'd by reason. For tho' an author writes in a language peculiar to his country, yet if he is of distinguish'd merit, he is quickly translated into all languages, and becomes common to all Europe. Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Guarini†, are translated into French, Spanish, English, &c. Milton's Paradise Lost, and several works of Pope‡, are translated almost into as many languages. All the universe, by means of the many translations, is master of the fine pieces of Corneille and Racine ; and the Andromache of the latter has been translated by the most excellent Italian poet of these latter times.

I don't know any German poem, dear Isaac, that has made any figure in Europe ; and I question whether ever there was one translated. This would make me suspect, either that the German poets are not so

† Italian Poets.

‡ English Poets.

excellent

excellent as they think them, or that they perceive beauties in their works which are unknown to the rest of human beings. In this case the German poems would be a kind of Talismans, that had no virtue but conditionally.

Thou knowest, dear Isaac, that Charles V. was heard to say, that when he was to pray to God, it should be in Spanish, that he would court his mistress in Italian, compliment his friends in French, and correct his horses in High-Dutch. Where then can be the harmony and softness of German verses? The muses are shy of a language, the roughness of which shocks them. But as there is no language but may be capable of a soft and agreeable cadence, when 'tis well express'd, I should think that the fault of the German poems is owing rather to the poets than the language. There are nations that are not so excellent as others in certain sciences. The Germans indeed are eminent for their skill in the law of nations, politics, literature and philosophy; and their philosopher Leibnitz alone is as good to them as a hundred poets, in the republic of letters.

Farewell, dear Isaac; and live content and happy.

L E T-

LETTER CXVI.

The ridiculous method made use of by Spanish gentlemen to gallant their mistresses.—The shocking effects of jealousy, illustrated by an extraordinary story of the marchioness d'Astorgas.—Spanish jealousy arises rather from vanity than love.—Children allow'd to marry in Spain without the consent of their parents.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Madrid—

Having given thee an account how the monks behave here in their gallantries, nothing remains for me but to convey some idea to thee how the gentlemen treat their mistresses. They act according to a ceremonial which is almost as difficult to discharge in all its parts as the antient Etiquette or ceremony of the court.

Before a Spaniard declares his passion he must for seven or eight months dance attendance in the night-time under his mistress's windows ; he must try to gain her esteem and favour by abundance of serenades ; he must be sure to go regularly to the churches which his fair-one frequents ; and finally, he must lash himself devoutly under her windows, if opportunity presents, and if his mistress happens to be a spectator of the processions made by the Nazarenes towards the end of their Lent seasons.

When a Spaniard thinks, that by all these extravagancies he has made some impression upon the heart of the person he makes love to, he ventures to send a billet-doux to her, by the favour of an old Duena†, whom he takes care to secure in his interest. If he is so fortunate as to obtain an answer to it, he thinks himself the happiest man in life. Then he begins to converse with his mistress by signs in the

* The Duena is a sort of Governess,

walks and at church, and this he does continually till he has marry'd her. Then he shuts her up, and is more or less jealous of her, according as he has found her more or less cruel; the happiness and tranquility of a wife commonly depending on the bad nights, which she made her husband spend when he was but a lover, and on the severities with which she treated him. The haughty don Sancho's and don Pedro's can't conceive how mortals can be happy with ease when it costs them so much pains to be so; and they have so fond an opinion of their own merit, that they have no distrust of the virtue and fidelity of their wives.

This country has been treated by many authors as the very centre of gallantry. But I don't think there's any place under the heavens where 'tis less known, except a medley of frolics be admitted to pass for complaisance; and unless it be granted that a man cannot be a tender lover, without being a fool and a madman.

Let men cry up the discretion, gravity and constancy of a Spaniard as much as they please, all these pretended virtues are blended with so many ridiculous follies, that unless a man is accustom'd to them, he must look upon them with more contempt than the baseness and stupidity of the French petits maitres.

I am of opinion, that out of a Spaniard and a Frenchman together might be form'd a tolerable lover, tho' both are seldom so when they are in love. Be it as it will, I had much rather see people always laughing and giggling, singing, dancing and playing the fool, than to hear them continually groaning, sighing, wailing and lamenting. Love is an infant which is nourish'd by sports and pastimes; but when kept under constraint, it becomes somewhat gloomy and cruel. And we often find in this country, that the jealous temper of the Spaniards is drove by melancholy to the commission of surprizing outrages.

The women themselves are guilty of this fault, and their passion renders them capable of attempting the greatest of crimes. They are as jealous as the men;

and love in Sain is rather a horrible fury than an agreeable passion, granted to mortals to make them happy.

Towards the close of the last century, the marquis d' Astorgas, of the family of Osorio, steward of the queen's household, who was marry'd to a lady that was extremely jealous of him, fell in love with an amiable young woman that was a great beauty. The marchioness, enrag'd to be so rivall'd, resolv'd to be reveng'd on her. ‘ She went therefore to the house of her husband's mistress, with a good attendance, kill'd her, tore out her heart, made a ragout of it, and presented it in the dish to her husband, who had no sooner eat of it, but she ask'd him how he lik'd it ? ’ Tis very good, said he to her. I don't wonder at it, said she ; ’tis the heart of that mistress whom you was so fond of. Immediately she drew out her head all bloody, which she had conceal'd under her hoop, and roll'd it upon the table where he was fitting with his friends. ’Tis easy to judge what a shocking sight it was to them. She fled to a convent, where she became mad with rage and jealousy; and there she ended her days. And so great was the affliction of the unfortunate marquis, that it had like to have drove him into despair †.

A story so surprizing as this would scarce meet with credit, if the persons whom it concern'd were not known to all Europe; and posterity will be affish'd to see the fact set out in all its circumstances by the authors of this time. Jealousy is the cause of murders and assassinations in Spain every day. They don't scruple to make use of poison to get rid of a rival of either sex; and the women are commonly more intemperate than the men in a passion so dangerous.

But be the jealous temper of the Spaniards ever violent, ’tis not so much owing to the tenderness of love's passion, as to that vanity and self-conceit which

† Memoirs of the Court of Spain, &c. Tom. I. p. 137.
for

forms the principal character of that nation. The Italians are only jealous from constitution, but the Spaniards are not only so constitutionally, but from pride. Were they to love their wives and mistresses but indifferently, they would not hate their rivals the less; it being an unpardonable crime with them to be told that any body is more deserving than themselves: For a rival is always guilty by being preferr'd, and a mistress by granting such preference.

Were I to make my choice, dear Monceca, among the fair sex, I should wish her to have the sprightliness of the Spanish lady, the gaiety of the Italian, and the freedom of the French. These qualities united would absorb what there is too much of in one. I look upon love to be like Tartar Emetic: 'Tis a poison in its own nature, but may be so alleviated as to be render'd useful. Happy those lovers who know the just preparation of this agreeable remedy!

They who are in love in this country have a great advantage by virtue of the decisions of an assembly of the Nazarene pontiffs, which was held near 200 years ago *. They may marry without the consent of their parents, which is a practice directly contrary to the laws and customs of France. Consequently the fathers in this country are never sure who will be the husbands of their daughters; for there are several who go with their lover to a priest, where they receive the nuptial benediction, and are marry'd in spite of their families, who cannot answer to maltreat them, or hinder them from living with the man they have chose for their husband.

The assembly of the Nazarene pontiffs, which decided that the consent of the father was not necessary to marriage, went upon the principle that such union only consisted in the free and voluntary consent of the two parties †. It forbid the dissolving of mar-

* The council of Trent.

† Matrimonium est consensus partium liber et voluntarius.
Council of Trent.

riages, as is the practice in France, and declar'd for a literal adherence to the maxim of their sovereign legislator, which commands them not to put asunder, on any pretence whatsoever, those whom God had join'd together §. And to the end that this law might be strictly observ'd, the same assembly pronounced an anathema, not only against the secular judges, who should take cognizance of the incidents and disputes that might arise concerning the celebration of marriages, but also against those who should presume to think that such matters are not cognizable by the ecclesiastical judges *.

What's pretty odd is, that several of the decrees of this assembly, upon which the faith of the Nazarenes in Spain is founded, are not at all admitted in France. The parliaments have establish'd a distinction between faith and discipline. They have asserted, that this assembly could not decide matters that were not within its jurisdiction, and much less could they do it in such a way as is directly contrary to the privileges of the French nation. Its tribunals, therefore, as thou knowest, dissolve a great many marriages, and declare them void, when they have been concluded against the laws and regulations of the kingdom.

There is nothing so prudent as the care of the parliaments to maintain their own prerogatives, those of the temporal judges, and those which parents ought to have over their children. How many disorders are the consequence of that indulgence which is imprudently granted to the latter, of marrying without the consent of their superiors? Is it not paving the way to confusion and disturbance? Is it not setting the sons of a family free from that submission which they owe to those who brought them into the world, and which has been so strongly

§ Quod ergo deus coniunxit, homo non separat, Matth. xix. 6.

* Si quis dixerit causas matrimoniales non ad judices ecclesiasticos pertinere, Anathema sit, Council of Trent.

recommended to all the antients? 'Tis one of God's express commandments in his law. 'Tis impossible for children that fear and honour their parents, to dispose of their own persons without their parents consent; and 'tis plainly neglecting to take their advice in the most important action of life.

The custom which permits the sons of a family to settle themselves, without consulting their parents, is not only contrary to the law of nature, but is also intirely destructive of the harmony of civil society. It is the cause of unions and marriages the most extraordinary and most disproportioned. What evil is there that may not be apprehended from a law that permits young people, carry'd away by the fury of their passions, to gratify those same passions, and to follow wheresoever they lead them? We every day see persons that are advanced in years, running into prodigious errors, and making settlements which disgrace or ruin them. What will not those do, therefore, who are drawn aside by the violence of their constitution, and have neither the experience nor the knowledge of older men?

Yet none of these reasons could prevail with the Spaniards to use the wise precautions of the French; for without distinction and without reserve, they receive the decrees of that pontifical assembly, which the others rejected in affairs of discipline. And such extraordinary adventures happen every day in this country, that they convince the Spaniards in spite of their prejudice and superstition, that the French have acted very discreetly, in setting bounds to the licentiousness of the youth, and confining the cognizance of all matters relating to civil society, to the secular judges.

One very often sees young ladies of distinction marry'd to clowns, or the domestic servants of their fathers; and young men of quality not ashamed to match with the daughters of the dregs of the people. Twelve or fourteen years ago, the

daughter of a governor of Catalonia * was marry'd privately to a man not worth a groat, who had been her father's page. And the governor could not only never obtain the dissolution of so unequal a marriage, but was even oblig'd to let his daughter go away with her husband.

Thou wilt confess, dear Monceca, that this sort of conduct is what absolutely ruins that good order which ought to prevail in a state; and that the introducing such pernicious maxims into a government is enough to overthrow it. It must be confess'd, however, that there is not so much danger of 'em in Spain as there would be in another country, the pride and vanity of this nation being a very great hinderance to unequal marriages. The haughty and disdainful don Diego's, and don Rodrigo's, are not so ready to descend from their rank; and they must be desperately in love to proceed to such an extremity.

The women are not so scrupulous; consequently we find many more such disproportion'd matches on their part than on the mens side; for they have not so much power to resist as the men have, tho' they are every whit as proud, this being a foible common to every thing that breaths in this country. Even foreigners, after some stay here, contract this ill habit; and we see Frenchmen here that affect a grave sedate air, that walk with stiff and solemn pace, and endeavour to speak little and sententiously: They are even more ridiculous than the Spaniards; and I can't conclude my letter so well as by applying to them this notable passage out of one of the most celebrated French writers: ' Gravity is a mystery of the body, invented to conceal the defects of the mind †.'

Farewell, dear Monceca; live content and happy; and may the God of our fathers crown thee with his benefits?

* The Count de Montemar.

† La Rochefoucault.

LETTER CXVII.

A description of the city of Hamburg.—Their method of government.—Petty princes very numerous in Germany, great tyrants and are exceeding poor and proud.—Germans cut no figure in poetry; that want supplied in other excellent writers, such as Leibnitz and Puffendorf.—A learned man upon an equality as to real merit with a prince.—Character of the Germans in general.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

Hamburg.—

I HAVE been arrived for some days past at Hamburg, which is reckoned one of the richest cities in Germany. A great many merchants from all the nations in Europe flock to it for the sake of commerce. The river Elbe, is a very great ornament to it; and 'tis navigable by ships to the very ramparts of the city.

Hamburg is very well built, and full of very fine houses. Here are several magnificent walks; and the beauty of the public structures is answerable to the wealth of its private inhabitants. The magistrates have the government of affairs political and civil, and represent the sovereign. This is one of those they call imperial cities. It has the prerogative of keeping their own guard, and of coining money; and for making a certain acknowledgment to the emperor, it enjoys all the privileges of a free and independent republic.

Of this class of cities there's a considerable number, which are all very jealous of their privileges, and form as many petty republics. Their territories, small as they are, are bigger than those of a great many sovereigns that we see in Germany, which country alone contains more courts than all the rest of Europe together; so that a traveller often

often passes through five or six different dominions in a day. As diminutive as these princes are, yet they have several gentlemen to attend them in the quality of courtiers; but they don't cost them much; for the greatest expence of these mimi^cs of sovereigns consists in the table they keep, which commonly licks up two thirds of their revenues.

There are as many highnesses in Germany as there are excellencies in Brabant: But the German highnesses have a considerable advantage over the Flemish excellencies; for they have the sad prerogative of tormenting the inhabitants of two or three villages, and they can even hang them up, if they have a fancy for it; whereas the excellencies of Flanders and Brabant are but mere gentlemen, who have no more power over their vassals than what the gentry commonly have in all countries. It were to be wish'd, for the happiness and tranquility of Germany, that all those petty sovereigns were reduc'd by the emperor, to the same pass that the kings of France have reduc'd the swarms of little tyrants that were heretofore in their dominions.

To live happy in Germany is to reside in some imperial city, or in the dominions of the electors, who are as powerful, and even as formidable, as those that I have mention'd to thee are weak and inconsiderable. There are several of the electors whose courts are nothing inferior to those of kings, and every thing about them strongly denotes grandeur and magnificence.

Denmark pretends to have prerogatives over the city of Hamburg, which has had frequent disputes with that crown, and would, perhaps, have much ado to maintain their rights, if the empire was not oblig'd to protect it as an imperial city, and did not oppose the undertakings of that crown against it.

The burghers and the merchants of this city are very polite. Their attachment to commerce does not take them off from the duties of the gentleman. They love, and even cultivate the arts and sciences, and several of them read good books to unbend themselves

selves from their business. There are many libraries here well chose. The greatest poet that Germany ever produc'd was a Hamburger. Many people say that Brocks may be compared with the most excellent of the French poets ; but I know not whether this is not carrying the point a little too far. What I wrote to thee from Berlin must have come to thy hand by this time, about German poetry : I have not yet chang'd my opinion, and I don't allow the Germans the same rank in poetry as in the civil law and philosophy. Every nation has its peculiar talents. Heaven would have been unjust in its distributions, if, after having granted a Puffendorf and a Leibnitz to the Germans, it had also produc'd a Moliere and Boileau among them.

As to Leibnitz I have heard a particular anecdote of him in this country. That illustrious philosopher had a bastard, whom he employ'd as his clerk, and in whom he plac'd great confidence. His name was William Dinniger. Des Cartes had also a daughter by his mistress call'd Francina, whom he had not the satisfaction to bring up ; for she dy'd young, and he lamented the loss of her very much. I am not scandalliz'd, dear Isaac, when I see the greatest of men liable to little failings ; for, as they are men, 'tis but natural that they have a trial of every thing that appertains to the human nature. I respect even the fruit and issue of their frailty : The bastard of Leibnitz, if he had but resembled his father, would have been more dear to me than the lawful son of a German prince, who has nothing to boast but his descent. Nay, I believe I should have preferr'd the philosopher's bastard to the prince himself, if he had had as much learning, and as many good qualities, as his father.

This is not my private opinion only, for it has been maintain'd by a great many ingenious men. Not long ago, said a French writer †, this trite frivolous question was proposed in a celebrated

† Voltaire's Letters concerning the English, p. 79.

company,

company, viz. Which was the greatest man in the world, Cæsar, Alexander, Tamerlane, Cromwel? &c. One of them made answser Sir Isaac Newton was undoubtely the greatest man. His assertion was just; for if true greatness consists in having received a prodigious genius from Heaven, and making use of it to enlighten his own and others understandings, such a man as Sir Isaac Newton, who is hardly to be found in ten centuries, is really that great man; and those politicians, those conquerors, of which there have been some in all ages, are commonly but illustrious wicked men.'

These few words, dear Isaac, are so compleat a panegyric upon learning, and the good use of it, that nothing can be added to it. What is it to me, a native of France, England or Holland, that a prince of Germany has a splendid court, that he keeps a good table, that he has a numerous train of domestics and courtiers? What am I the better for it? And what advantage is it to Europe?

Of what advantage is it to society for princes to give some of their favourites such vast presents as intitle them to the character of being generous?

How many calamities are owing to the vain ambition of some sovereigns, who are for enlarging their dominions, and invading those of their neighbours? How many wretched mortals has it not condemn'd to death? How many victims has it not sacrific'd to envy and jealousy? How many men have there not been ruin'd purely that one man might have the arrogant title of conqueror? What madness is it therefore, to bestow the name of Great upon a mortal, born to make all his subjects miserable?

A sovereign cannot come up to the glory of Newton, or such other philosopher of equal reputation, but by rendering himself the father of his people, and procuring them all the felicities that are in his power: He then becomes useful to mankind and imitates the philosopher. The prince and the scholar

scholar are equal in merit ; the one informs the understanding, and improves the judgment ; and the other procures and maintains the tranquility which is so necessary to the welfare of society, and the advancement of the sciences.

The magistrates of Hamburg endeavour by their wise conduct to put these precepts in practice. They make it their business to encourage all the arts which they think may contribute to render the people easy ; and, as most of them have travell'd in their youth, they make use of what they have seen of most advantage in foreign countries, and appropriate it to their own.

All the Germans in general are great travellers ; but there are many who know not how to make so good a use of their travels as the Hamburgers. One half of the barons, and petty gentry, that travel into divers parts of Europe, only bring home the names of what towns they saw. 'Tis enough for them that they spent a good deal of money at Paris, Rome, Madrid, or London ; but at their return home they find ways and means to make their unfortunate vassals replace the money they have foolishly squander'd. Woe be to the poor Germans, when their gentry at Paris happen to fall into the hands of any of the women at the opera ! Every jewel, every present, in short, bestow'd upon the greedy mistress, does them as much prejudice as the hail does, when it beats down their fruits in the country.

The meanner sort of people at Hamburg are not at all afraid of those misfortunes. Their freedom insures their tranquility. This is all that they work for, and they are not afraid of being oblig'd to pay for the follies of a young blockhead. It were to be wish'd, that being content and satisfy'd with their privileges, they were so prudent as not to abuse them ; and that they would keep within the bounds of a wise subjection to their magistrates. But they make an ill use of their liberty, and nothing is so insolent as the populace of Hamburg. They are often

often wanting in their obedience due to the magistrates, whom they own to be vested with the sovereign power; and the said magistrates have enough to do to prevent disturbances from a people always ready to mutiny.

The city of Hamburg has a dangerous rival in its neighbourhood, viz. Altena, that rises insensibly, and becomes every day more and more considerable. There's a very great jealousy between the inhabitants of the two towns; and so far is it from being like to diminish, that it will rather increase as long as Altena continues to aggrandize itself.

The Hamburgers, as well as all the Germans, love good cheer. If we may take Montaigne's word for it, the Germans drink almost indifferently of all wines with pleasure, their business being to swallow, more than to taste. To drink after the French fashion at the two meals, and then but moderately, is to be too abstemious in the use of the favours of the God of wine. There is more time and constancy required than that comes to †.

Since Montaigne's time there's a new face of things in Germany. They drink still there; but so far are they from esteeming drunkennes as a virtue, that they are almost ready to censure it as a vice *. Formerly there was a necessity of drinking to excess, or a man was look'd upon with contempt. But now, even at feasts every body is left at liberty to drink as much or as little as they please. The women of quality drink very little wine, and many of the German women are very sober, compar'd to the French women. After this, it can be no longer doubted, that the most antient customs are chang'd by time; and when a man reflects how the Germans are come off from their drunkennes, he will not think it impossible for the jesuits to be

† Montaigne's Essays, lib. ii. cap. 2.

* This only refers to the men of quality and the burghers; for as to the common people, they drink now as liberally as they did in Montaigne's time.

cur'd of their ambition. Nothing less than so convincing an instance could give any hopes of a conversion so unexpected.

There is sometimes a company of French comedians at Hamburg, as there is also in most of the courts in Germany. I applaud their judgment in this point; for I really think the French theatre the most perfect in Europe. In all the countries thro' which I ever travell'd, and in which a good taste prevail'd, I never miss'd seeing a French comedy, and an Italian opera. This seems to fix the merit of the theatres of these two nations.

There's a German opera in this city, the music of which is in the Italian taste. The masters that compose the pieces that are play'd here, were a long time at Rome; but the German words have not that soft cadence which is so necessary to harmonize with music: Nor do the actors come near to the perfection of the Italian virtuosi; they have neither their taste nor their voice. Yet the German opera is pleasing to all persons that only attend to the goodness of the music.

Farewell, dear Isaac, live content and happy; and may the God of our fathers crown thee with wealth and prosperity! I shall take the first opportunity to depart for London.

LETTER CXVIII.

Libraries of private gentlemen and of the convents in Spain, badly furnished.---The reason of it.---Galileo and bishop Virgil punished and persecuted for making useful discoveries in philosophy.---Remarks on the Spanish historians and other writers.---Character of the duke of Alva.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Madrid-----

THIS is like to be the last letter that I shall write to thee from Madrid; for I am preparing to set out forthwith for Lisbon: Mean time the Vol. III. I business

business I had in this city being entirely finished I amuse myself with running over the libraries of the rich private men, and of the convents, which really are so poorly furnished, and with such a Wantment of books, that I am but little the better for it ; there being hardly any besides some book of divinity, poetry, and store of romances. There are none of those books to be seen here that have restored good-sense to the world, and shewn the understanding how to make use of the light of nature. Instead of Newton, Des Cartes, Gassendi, Locke, Bayle, Mallebranche, &c. here are a great many school philosophers, whose writings are but compilations, as voluminous as they are indigested, the strangest visions.

Sound philosophy is what they know nothing of in Spain. The inquisition, its most mortal enemy, persecutes every person that offers to enlighten mankind. It is so much the interest of that court to keep them in their blindness, that it is sure to punish those who attempt to clear the mist that is before their eyes. The Spaniards are indeed permitted to discharge all the animal functions ; but they are expressly forbid to think. Every man that presumes to broach the least sentiment which is not to the taste of the monks, is inhumanly made a prisoner for life. The unfortunate Galileo, at the age fourscore, groaned in the prisons of the inquisition for having demonstrated a thing of which even the true philosopher is now fully persuaded*. There was a time when all the Nazarene pontiffs declared those to be heretics who maintained that there were Antipodes. Poor Virgil, the bishop of Salzburg, was not he formerly persecuted by pope Zacharias and the archbishop Boniface, for presuming to support that abominable error ? But somewhat more than two centuries ago, Christopher Columbus happily cleared up the point.

* The motion of the earth.

The Spanish libraries are scarce any better furnished with modern historians than they are with philosophers. A writer is obliged to accommodate himself to the superstition of the country. Thou plainly perceivest that the truth of history cannot appear in a state where the writers are obliged not only to commend the most odious actions of the monks, but also intirely to omit what might give them offence. They have however some historians of their own nation that deserve the esteem of good judges; but of these there are but very few.

Anthony de Solis, author of the history of the conquest of Mexico, is one of the chief. It would have been a piece not inferior to the histories of Tacitus, Salust, and Titus Livy, if he had but left out the great number of miracles which he has sufficed it with, and which he pretends were operated in favour of Ferdinando Cortes and his companions, who were nevertheless the greatest rascals in the world; and if he had not too often magnify'd things in their favour. He speaks with a great air of truth, of a certain monument that was covered, for several days, with a miraculous cloud *; and notwithstanding he had such a genius, he could not divest himself of the prejudices of his country, or help giving too much credit to monkish superstition.

Sandoval is another pretty good author; but he had neither the genius nor the merit of Solis. He is not near so exact, and far more superstitious, for instance; he gives a long detail of the miracles that happened when Charles V. gained a victory over the protestants in Germany; and tells an absurd ridiculous story as a fact known by all Europe to be true. He gravely affirms, that during the battle, the sun appeared as red as blood, not only over all Germany, but also in France and Italy. It were to be wished, for his sake, and for the dignity of the history which he wrote, that he had spoke as ludi-

* 'Twas a cross erected by the soldiers of Ferdinando Cortes.

croully of this fable as the duke of Alva did, when Henry II. king of France asked him for an account of this pretended miracle at Paris: Pardon me, Sir, said that prudent general to him, if I am not able to satisfy your curiosity: I was really so much taken up that day with what was doing upon earth, that I had not leisure to consider what passed in heaven.

That same duke of Alva, during the revolt in the Netherlands, had sent his son to lay siege to Haerlem: But the son met with such difficulties in it, that despairing of being ever able to take it, he wrote to his father, that he question'd whether he could execute his orders. Upon this, the duke return'd for answer to him; 'I order you to make yourself master of Haerlem. If you will not obey me, I will go myself, gouty as I am, and continue the siege. If my distemper disables me from action, I will send to Spain for Donna Innes, your mother and my wife, to come and make herself mistress of Haerlem: And I will never suffer that a tower attack'd by my son, shall be taken by any but him or his parents.' These two passages relating to the duke of Alva, have made me drop the Spanish historians; but I now return to them.

Anthony de Herrera is one of the best of them; and he has given us a good history of America. The Spaniards have done what they could to suppress it, because they don't like his plain account of the horrid cruelties which they so inhumanly exercised in the new world. Don Bartholomew de las Casas, another of their historians, has done the same thing, for which he is the more to be esteem'd, as he was not only an ecclesiastic, but a friar, and because notwithstanding these two characters, so much to the disadvantage of history, he has courageously got the better of that cruel prejudice of the men of those two orders against all who have the misfortune not to think as they do. The sincerity of these two candid

Spaniards

Spaniards has render'd their works very scarce ; but they are translated into several languages.

Mariana the jesuit has wrote a very good history of Spain ; which he compos'd at first in Latin, and afterwards translated into Spanish, but without keeping too servilely to his original. This is one of the best works of the kind that these times have produc'd. There's the same majesty in it from the beginning to the end. In those fine passages which furnish the author with ample matter to display his eloquence, he never is too lavish of it, nor is he too sparing of it in such parts of the history as furnish him with topics that are not so florid. The very enemies of the jesuits confess that Mariana was a great historian. A protestant has not scrupled to declare that he was superior to all the modern historians that had wrote in the Latin tongue, not only for the great knowledge which he had in the affairs of Spain, but for his eloquence, the simplicity of his style, and his freedom of expression. But this very man accuses the jesuit for blaming the princes whose lives he wrote, and for sometimes censuring them too sarcastically*.

It cannot be deny'd that Mariana had shocking notions of the respect due to sovereigns ; and that several of the maxims which he has maintained concerning the obedience due from the subjects, tend only to the subversion of states, and to the dethroning of kings ever so well establish'd. 'Tis not in his history of Spain that these dangerous opinions stand so barefac'd, but in another Latin tract, of a king and his institution. He therein styles James Clement, who assassinat'd Henry III. The everlasting honour of France ; Galliæ decus æternum. He endeavours

* Inter Latinos omnibus Palmam præripit Johannes Mariana Hispanus, rerum Hispanicarum cognitione nemini secundus. Valtuit vero Mariana insigni eloquentia, prudentia, et magna libertate dicendi. Hinc et libertatis studiosissimus in reges suos saepe est mordax. Herm. Conringius de regno Hispaniæ, apud pope Blount censuræ authorum, p. 614.

all he can to justify that monster†. But the parliament of Paris caus'd the book to be burnt by the common hangman ; and the arret pass'd by that supreme tribunal, has render'd the memory not only of Mariana, but of all the jesuits who have put their opinions into practice but too often, odious to all honest men.

Of the great number of authors that have amus'd themselves in composing of romances, the illustrious and ingenious Michael de Cervantes, author of the History of the Renowned don Quixote de la Mancha, deserves the first rank. The works of that ingenious writer have been, and always will be, the delight and admiration of all Europe : Yet 'tis not absolutely free from the defect peculiar to his country ; and as he was by birth a Spaniard, he could not help paying a tribute to superstition. He finds the intrigue of one of the most charming episodes in his book upon the conversation between a Turkish woman and Lela Maria ; and the Madonna, who is lugg'd in very preposterously, comes every night to command her to go to Spain.

Matthew Aleman, author of the Life of Guzman d'Alferche, tho' inferior to Cervantes, wrote nevertheless in a pure simple manner, both amusing and instructive ; and his romance may even do the more good, because while he is strongly painting the absurdities and disorders of civil life, he makes it plain to demonstration, that the end of them must be wretched. I don't mention the life of Lazarillo de Tormes, the adventure of Mark d'Obregon, and twenty others of the like stamp ; because they are only wrote to relate the lives of beggars and wretches, just as an infinite number of sorry little French romances are penn'd only with a view to tell certain

† All mankind, says this jesuit, does not pass the same construction upon the action of the friar (Clement.) Many people there are that think it worthy of immortality, and the highest praise. *De facto monachi (Clementis) non una opinio fuit multius laudantibus, atque immortalitate dignum judicantibus Mariana de rege et regis instit. lib. i. cap. vi.*

foolish imaginary adventures, and sentiments ridiculous refin'd.

There's not a country in the whole world where more romances are writ than in Spain; nor one where there are any so bad. To be convinc'd of this, one need only attend to the ingenious and judicious criticism of them by don Quixote's curate, and to the great number of those that he condemned to the flames, when he examin'd the library of that unfortunate knight. In all that number, four or five are the most that escaped the secular arm of the barber and servant-maid. Amadis de Gaul is one of those that finds quarter, and the curate praises it as the only one of its kind. I have been told by great men, said he, that 'tis the best book we have of the sort. But for one romance that was spar'd how many others were thrown into the fire? Espandian the son of Amadis de Gaul; don Olivante de Laura; Florimart of Hyrcania; don Platir; the knight of the cross; the mirror of knighthood; Barnardo del Carpio; Barnardo des Roncevalles; Palmerin d'Oliva; are all cast, without mercy, into the flames. Palmerin of England, and Tirante the White, are the only two books that have the same good fortune as Amadis de Gaul; the first as a master-piece, worthy to be preserv'd in as rich a box as Alexander found among the spoils of Darius, and which serv'd to inclose the works of Homier; the second as a diverting book, and an excellent antidote against the spleen.

The Spaniards have almost as many poets as romance-writers; but their good authors of that kind are still more scarce. The ten books of the fortune of Love, compos'd by Antony de Lofrasco, a Sardinian poet, are full of wit and spirit. The eclogues of don Lopez Maldonat may be compar'd with those of Virgil; all their fault being, that they are a little too tedious and too diffuse. His songs seem to have been dictated by love, and his verses of gallantry may be match'd with those of Anacreon. The Araucana of don Alonso d'Ercilla; the Austriada of Juan Ruffo, and the Montserrat of Christopher de Verves,

are

are, in the opinion of Michael de Cervantes, the best verses that ever were made in Spanish: And his opinion was just; for really those pieces are not inferior to any of the greatest poets.

Don Lopes de la Vega wrote such excellent comedies, that the great Corneille affirm'd he would have given up the two best of his tragedies to have been the author of the character of Menteur. Thou knowest that the French poet compos'd his from the Spanish original.

These, dear Monceca, out of so many volumes that the libraries of Spain consist of, are the only ones that deserve the esteem of able judges. One might add to them the works of Balthasir Gratian, if they were more natural and less perplex'd. This author has certainly very good things, especially in his Criticon, and his Homme de Cour; which are in my opinion, his two best pieces. But there too, as well as in his other writings, one finds unnatural ideas, and expressions too far fetch'd, and too much strain'd.

Of all the Spanish authors the divines are the first in rank; but these writers have been so often disparaged, and thou thyself so well knowest the chaos of impertinences which their works contain, that it would be to no purpose for me to enter into a particular detail of the books with which they have overburden'd the public. I don't believe that they can be more severely ridicul'd than they have been by the famous Paschal; who has given many of them a mortal wound; and since his Provincial Letters were publish'd, all Europe is convinced that the most absurd and most extravagant questions are what the most of those authors have applied themselves to.

I look upon the Spanish divines in general as a set of men whom all the hellebore of Anticyra could not cure*. They accustom themselves, from the time that they begin to study, to feed upon nothing but

* Tribus Anticyris caput insanabile.

Horat. de Arte Poet. v. 300

chimeras

chimeras : And they are crack-brain'd to such a degree, that it would be more easy to restore the hero of Michael de Cervantes to his senses, than a man infatuated with the maxims of Sanches, Suarez, Escobar, Tambourin, and others of that stamp.

Consider, dear Monceca, what a crime it would be in Spain, if any one publicly maintain'd that all the books of knight-errantry are not so pernicious as one single scholaistic divine, to disturb and turn the strongest and the soundest brain. I would rather almost be accus'd of the most henious crimes, than of having maintain'd such a proposition. The fire would no doubt be my reward, and I should be detested by all the people ; for the inhabitants of this country have such an implicit veneration for every thing which comes from the hands of the monks, that they are the first to deify the chimeras and imaginations they are possess'd with.

The French Nazarenes have a great many divines; but their manner of writing is quite different from that of the Spaniards. They take care to let nothing escape in their works that is impertinent ; and if sometimes they discuss matters which they do not very well understand, the caution with which they explain themselves, and the mild terms they make use of, hinder them from falling into the extravagancies of the Spaniards. There is almost as much difference between a doctor of the Sorbonne, and a doctor of Salamanca, as between a grave historian and a Persian poet. The former explains things that are doubtful with great modesty, charges many passages which he cannot explain, upon the weakness of the human understanding ; and he submits his difficulties and his doubts to the orders of the Deity, when he cannot understand the reason of them. The latter runs, like the Persian poet, into gigantic and ridiculous notions ; he is willing to know and explain every thing ; and not content with the difficulties that occur in his religion, he forms new ones to himself, which

which he resolves in a ridiculous manner, enough to destroy the strongest and best establish'd faith.

Farewell, dear Monceca; live content and happy; and may the God of our fathers preserve thee!

LETTER CXIX.

Some critical observations on the antient languages.

—Hebrew supposed to be the most antient.—

Some thoughts concerning the invention of speaking and writing.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo.—

I Did not receive thy letter from Amsterdam about the difference of languages, till some days after I had answer'd thy former ones.

They who suppose that the Hebrew is the first and most antient of all languages, have some grounds, I believe, for their opinion. For the same reason I think it may be maintain'd, that 'tis to the patriarchs we are oblig'd for the invention of letters, and that the Greeks and Romans had little foundation for ascribing it to the antient Phœnicians.

Indeed it was to the celebrated Cadmus that Greece was oblig'd for the art of writing. But the Hebrew language and characters had been carry'd to perfection long before; and when Moses wrote in Hebrew, the Greeks were still a barbarous people, like those that were discover'd two or three ages ago in America. Some writers have pretended that Cadmus was an Egyptian, and not a Phœnician. But this objection does not at all affect the present question; it being certain that the Greeks, before his time, were ignorant of the use of characters: Consequently we must look elsewhere for the invention of writing. The names which Cadmus gives to the letters, are the same as those of the Hebrew alphabet: It therefore follows from thence, that the characters of it were already well known. But the gratitude of the

Greeks

Greeks for the favour they had receiv'd from their first master, engag'd them to ascribe to him the honour of having invented those very letters which had been in use among the Hebrews for a long time before.

The Romans, who receiv'd the arts and sciences, and fables, from the Greeks, were also of opinion that Cadmus was the inventor of writing. Lucan not only confirm'd that opinion among his contemporaries, but effectually transmitted it to posterity; and such as did not care to go to the bottom of the question, adher'd blindly to that author's decision. The happy and elegant manner of his expressing his sentiments, and the excellent translation of his beautiful verses by an able pen, have also very much contributed to establish that opinion, and to render it common. As there are few scholars but have by heart this passage in Lucan;

*Phœnices primi (Famæ si credimus) au si
Mansuram rudibus vocem signare figuris.*

i. e.

Fame reports that the Phœnicians were the first that ventur'd to make dumb characters speak.

So there are few Frenchmen that are ignorant of these verses of Brebeuf:

*C'est de lui que nous vient cet art ingenieux
De peindre la parole, et de parler aux yeux ;
Et par les traits divers de figures tracées,
Donner de la couleur et du corps aux pensees.*

i. e.

To him we owe the ingenious art of painting, speech, and speaking to the eyes, and of giving colour, and even body, to the thoughts of men, by certain characters represented in various shapes.

Thus, dear Monceca, do the most evident errors often find general credit in mens minds, and are receiv'd as certain truths. No body has, to my thinking, better confuted this false opinion than an able doctor among the Nazarenes. 'Tis demonstrable, says he, that the Greeks did not give the alphabet to the

the Hebrews (but that the former rather receiv'd it from the latter) because those names which in Greek have no signification, have in the Hebrew a meaning, as is observ'd by Plutarch: Consequently they are barbarous terms with regard to the Greeks, and natural to the Hebrews *.

Another proof is, that the Greeks making use of the alphabet in computation, when they left off the use of some of the Hebrew characters for keeping up the value of the others, they substituted a new sign in the place of the antient letter that was suppress'd. For example; after having rejected the Vau, which is the Æolic Digamma, and the letter F of the Latins, they put in its place this marks, to denote the number 6, of which the Hebrew Vau is the sign; it being the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

These, dear Monceca, are plain proofs of the antiquity of the Hebrew characters; and perhaps it might be suppos'd that Adam, who had been created with dispositions proper to contrive and perfect the arts, did first find out the secret of writing, and made use of various signatures to communicate his ideas. Perhaps he had at first but a certain quantity of them, and that they were increas'd in proportion as mankind multiply'd. This however is certain, that we must seek for the original of writing among the first patriarchs; and consequently 'tis but natural to suppose that the Hebrew having been the first language of mankind, the characters and letters of that language were also the first that were made use of.

The manner of writing the old Hebrew, and which continu'd even one hundred years after the emperor Constantine I. is another confirmation of this conjecture. There was no such thing as pointing known, nor was there any vowel distinguis'd upon the paper; evident proofs of the very great simplicity of a language, and also of its antiquity. Some French-

* See the Art of Speaking; or, the Rhetoric of Father Lami, cap. xix. p. 106.

men to whom I talk'd of this, while I was at Constantinople, were very much astonish'd at it. They could not imagine how it was possible to understand a word of which only half of the letters was express'd; and I had much ado to convince them that the points which stand for vowels in the Hebrew, were only necessary to make the reading of Hebrew books easy to those who do not understand the language. After a great deal of difficulty and plague, I did at length convince them how it was possible to be done, by making them read a letter, penn'd by a woman, in which there was not one word written true. ‘ You read this writing, said I to them, without any difficulty. You have no regard to the letters which are superfluous; and you supply those which are wanting, without the least hesitation. How comes this about? ’Tis because your knowledge of the French tongue gives you such a readines in it, that you scarce see the want of some letters, the superfluity of others, and the wrong-placing of almost all. Why will you not believe that the knowledge of the Hebrew language gives us the same advantage, and makes us amends by those points which with us form vowels, and were only contriv'd when all the Jews, our brethren, had forgot their mother-tongue, and when there was an absolute necessity to remedy that inconvenience, for enabling them to read our sacred books?’

I approve thy opinion therefore, dear Moncea, and believe that the Hebrew tongue is the most antient and the root from whence all the others are deriv'd; but I can't agree to what thou say'st, that it would have been impossible for men to have form'd a language to themselves, if God had not created them, and if they had sprung out of the earth, as is maintain'd by certain philosophers. I am very far from a thought of favouring their impious opinions; but I think it may be affirm'd, that if men (which I assert to be an impossibility) had been form'd by chance, they would have contriv'd some kind of language whereby

whereby to communicate their thoughts to one another.

Thou seemest to differ widely from this opinion, and think'st it probable, ‘ That if they could not have understood one another absolutely as soon as they were born, instead of staying together, and endeavouring to unite, and form societies, they would have wander'd in the woods like the animals, and would never have endeavour'd, by common consent, to annex certain ideas to certain sounds.’

It will be easy for thee, dear Moncea, to see thy mistake, if thou dost but consider the temper of mankind, which is naturally inclin'd to society with one another, by an innate instinct. Undoubtedly those new creatures whom the philosophers raise out of the earth, and to whom they grant the endowments and talents of human beings, would make it their first business to form words †. They would seriously study to find out sounds that might help them to convey their ideas to one another. Suppose one per-

* See letter CVIII.

† At varios linguae sonitus natura subegit, &c.

Lucret. de Rer. Nat. lib. v. ver. 1027, &c.

Thus translated by Mr. Creech.

Kind nature, pow'r of framing sounds affords
To man ; and then convenience taught us words :
As infants now, for want of words, devise
Expressive signs : They speak with hands and eyes ;
Their speaking hand the want of words supplies.
All know their powr's ; they are by nature shwon :
Thus tender calves with naked front will run,
And fierce'y push before their horns are grown.
Young lions shew their teeth, prepare their paws ;
The bears young cubs unsheathe their crooked claws,
While yet their nails are young, and soft their jaws.
The birds strait use their wings, on them rely ;
And soon as danger press, they strive to fly.
Besides ; that one the names of things contriv'd,
And that from him their knowledge allderiv'd,
'Tis fond to think : For how could that man tell
The names of things, or lisp a syllable,
And not another man do so as well ?.

son only gave the same name to a thing several times ; it would have been sufficient. The person who should happen to have any busines with him, or the woman to whom nature should incline his attachment, would soon attribute that very word to the same thing. Two persons easily impart their thoughts to one another by the most unaccountable sounds, when once they have agreed what ideas to affix to those sounds. 'Tis true, that men would at first have had very few words to express their notions, if they had been under a necessity of intirely inventing a language. But as 'tis natural for people to make use of their first knowledge, they would have perfect'd their language in proportion as they aim'd to explain the things that should occur to their minds. Besides, a small number of terms is sufficient to form the beginnings of a language ; and when once the primitive words are found out 'tis an easy matter to multiply those words without much alteration or addition. The language of the Georgians is remarkable for this extraordinary simplicity. ' All the names deriv'd from the primitives differ only in this termination jani. If they are names of dignity, offices, or any art, the derivatives add me to the primitives. By placing the syllable sa before the name of a thing, they form a derivative, which denotes the place of it : Thus Thredi signifies a dove, and Sathredi a dove-house ; Chueli cheese, and Sachueli the place where 'tis kept *.'

Thou art not insensible, dear Moncea, that it would have been very easy for men naturally inclin'd to communicate their thoughts to one another, and having the facility of forming variety of sounds, soon to invent a language copious enough to give them the means of understanding one another, and of forming societies ; and that such societies would afterwards give birth to those different languages, to which every one would have added new words, and would perhaps have insensibly abandon'd the old

* See Father Lami's Art of Speaking, lib. i. cap. vii. p. 31.

ones, as we see has happen'd in our time in the poliest states. Thou can't not but own, that the French which is now spoke at Paris, is very different from that which was spoke three hundred years ago. From this first language those call'd the mother-tongues would have been form'd, and those would have produc'd others.

Thou perceivest therefore, dear Moncea, that the system of the atheistical philosophers is only absurd in their notion that men are mushrooms, that spring up in one night out of the earth, and not in their opinion that men form'd a language of their own; which, tho' 'tis certain they have not done, yet 'tis as certain, on the other hand, they might have done.

From the facility with which men might have form'd a language, I argue by consequence, that Adam had perhaps at first no notion of writing, and that it was not invented till afterwards, and perhaps not till after the death of that first patriarch. Nevertheless it might have been known to him, and he might have discover'd it by the single aid of reflection. Many philosophers pretend that Adam had science infus'd into him. For my part, I don't see where was the necessity that God should grant him this gift. 'Tis my opinion that he had only the means of cultivating those sciences of which he had the first seeds in him; and 'tis apparent, that since men might have form'd a language to themselves, if they had sprung out of the ground; with much more reason might they have found out characters to be the signs of such language.

The Americans had figures and marks to signify certain things. When the Spaniards first arriv'd in Mexico, Montezuma, the king of that barbarous country sent a certain number of writers, or rather painters, to meet them, who, by certain lines and figures, which they drew upon great pieces of callico, exactly described what they saw. This sort of characters was answerable to the antient hieroglyphics of the Egyptians, and every figure stood for one or more words.

'Tis

'Tis natural to suppose that writing was not invented all at once, but by degrees; and that it was improv'd to perfection in the same manner as language, in proportion to the number of the different ideas which mankind were desirous of communicating. All the arts have been produc'd the same way. If we may credit the story, we are oblig'd for carving and painting to a lady in love, whose beloved going to leave her for some time, love put this stratagem into her head, to mitigate her grief for his absence. She drew with a pencil upon a wall, the out-lines of her lover's figure, and this lifeless shade was what gave the first hint to painting and sculpture. This grotesque image, the produce of love and chance, was admir'd; and every woman was desirous to draw her lover's portraiture in the same manner. The men too, in their turn, were desirous to have some faint resemblance of their mistresses. And from a thing which seem'd but a trifle they came at last, as it were, to put life into cloth, and to make a flat superficies appear to the view as if it were rais'd.

Without having recourse therefore to Adam's inspir'd knowledge, one may find the source of all the sciences in mere chance, and in the passion which is natural to mankind to find out what may be useful to them, and to perfect it when they have got the least glimpse of it.

Farewell, dear Moncea; live content and happy; and may the God of our fathers prosper thee in abundance.

LETTER CXX.

Manners of the Portuguese described.—Spaniards and Portuguese at continual enmity with each other.—Story of a Spanish officer.—The Portuguese are slaves to the Monks, &c. notwithstanding their haughtiness in other respects.—The women under continual close confinement thro' the jealousy of their husbands.—Portugals affords very little pleasure to strangers.—The priests heroes of gallantry.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Lisbon.—

THE manners of the Portuguese are not surprising, dear Monceca, to a man that has been for a time in Spain, where one is accustom'd to forehand to see a people that are proud, superstitious and devoted to the monks. When I arriv'd at Lisbon, I scarce perceiv'd any difference but in the vivacity of the Portuguese disposition. They may be consider'd as the Gascons of Spain; and they are as self-conceited, and have almost as much fire and genius, as the inhabitants of the neighbourhood of the Garonne. They are not near so grave as the Spaniards, but are equally as vain, if not more so. If we may believe them, there is not one of 'em but can of himself beat a whole army of Spaniards. Alexander, Cæsar, Tamerlane, Mahomet II. Henry IV. and Charles XII. were mere poltrons compared to the Portuguese private soldiers, who think themselves so many heroes. The Spaniards, as may well be imagin'd, don't care to acknowledge this surprising valour. They pretend, on the contrary, that one Castilian is enough to put the whole kingdom of Portugal to flight;

*Et qu'il n'est aucun d'eux, que le ciel n'ait fait naître
Pour régir les mortals et leur parler en maître.*

i.e. 'And that there's not a man of 'em but is form'd by Heaven to govern and to controul mankind.'

In a dispute of much importance, may we not make use of history to decide this question? The Spaniards were a long time masters of the Portuguese; and had it not been for the cardinal de Richelieu, perhaps Lisbon, would still have been subject to Madrid. Philip II. not only conquer'd all Portugal in the twinkling of an eye, but his successors preserv'd it for near 60 years; and those are bad epocha's for the Portuguese. 'Tis true, that their country is so inconsiderable, compar'd to that of the Spaniards, that there's no judging from thence which is the most valorous. Be this as it will, it happens to be a great point of controversy. As long as there are Portuguese, they will pretend to be braver than the Spaniards; and these will, in all appearance, pretend to be braver than the Portuguese till doomsday. 'Tis a difficult matter for two nations so vain-glorious ever to admit of any sort of equality betwixt them.

So strong is the hatred and jealousy between the Spaniards and Portuguese, that they can't bear to own those qualities in their adversaries which are the most praise-worthy, and the most important: And we ought to be equally diffident of the characters given by either nation of the other; for where two persons are at law, would one expect to find the right and title of either in the memorials of the adverse party?

When I was at Madrid, I was told a story of an officer, which may give thee an idea of Spanish rhodomontades. During the last war, when the French enter'd Spain, to place Philip V. upon that throne, the Portuguese, thou know'st, had embrac'd the party of Charles III. The conde d' Atalaya, a gentleman of this nation, who commanded a detachment of German forces, on the frontiers of Portugal, sent a summons to a Spanish officer, who was entrench'd with 30 men, to surrender. The latter return'd an answer by a great volley of shot, and defended himself with extraordinary valour; but

at last the Germans forc'd him in his post ; and after having taken him prisoner, carry'd him before the conde d' Atalaya. Who advis'd you, said the conde, to pretend to stand out with 30 men against 400 ? Are you not sensible that I ought to punish you severely for that rashness of yours which has occasion'd the loss of so many good lives ? The Spaniard attended very coolly to what the conde said ; but was so nettled at the manner in which he spoke, that he made him this answer : Excuse me ; I did not know I had to do with Germans ; for I thought I had only to fight with 400 Portuguese. The conde thought it a very impertinent answer, and was heartily inclin'd to have us'd the officer very ill : But the Germans representing to him what might be the consequence of such violence, and that they ought to be civil to the officer, for fear of a reprizal, the Spaniard came off without any other mortification than the disgrace of being a prisoner.

Be the Portuguese ever so haughty, yet they are altogether as much in subjection to the monks, who have even more authority here than in Spain. The inquisition is also more severe here. Woe be to those that fall into its hands ! One thing which will surprize thee, dear Monceca, is, that notwithstanding this so severe and cruel a tribunal, there is still so great a number of conceal'd Jews in Portugal : And I have been assur'd, that among the wealthiest and most distinguish'd men in Lisbon, there is still a great number of Israelites, true to the faith of their fathers.

I dare not make my enquiry into things of this nature here, too public ; for, notwithstanding the character with which I am vested by my commission, I make no profession of my religion. For my greater security, I disguise my sentiments, because the power of the inquisitors is so great in this country, that perhaps the royal authority could not screen me from their hatred and their fury. I pass at Lisbon for an envoy from the republic of Genoa, and every body, except the ministers, take me for a Nazarene;

but

but I did not think it proper to keep it a secret from them, that, in case of need, I might be sure of their protection. Mean time, I make all the dispatch I can in my affairs. I am not easy in this country, and, thanks to the God of Israel! I hope to leave it very soon; for I have not many things to do. After so tedious a voyage I long to return to Constantinople, to be with my dear family; and I fancy that thou must have the same desire. But since thou art not yet able to return to thy kindred, endeavour to banish the thought from thee which may possibly disturb what pleasures thou takest. If thy travels are more tedious than mine, thou wilt feel the greater satisfaction when they are at an end. The more trouble we are at for any happiness, the dearer it is to us; and I declare to thee, dear Moncea, that I should have been extremely sorry if I had not made a tour through some part of Europe. Notwithstanding the plague I have had in my travels, I have, however, learned to know mankind, and reflect upon their whimsies.

Portugal is but a barren field for a philosopher to perfect his discoveries in, the people here being intirely ignorant of what is called sound philosophy. Aristotle, or rather his commentators, are privileg'd in this country to contend with common sense and reason. Des Cartes and Newton are here reckon'd the tools of Satan and their works pass for the productions of Hell, or but little better. There are, perhaps, some private men, who read the writings of those philosophers, but they are very few; and the monks publicly condemn them.

Though the Portuguese are wretched philosophers, yet they cultivate the sciences. There's an academy at Lisbon, which consists of some men of very good learning. The liberal arts are protected and encourag'd by the king, who receives all foreigners very kindly, that are capable of contributing to their improvement; and it may truly be said, that the sciences are much better cultivated in Portugal.

tugal than Spain. But to what purpose should any man desire the attainment of them? As long as the mind is under captivity and restraint, there never can be men of true learning in Portugal. At the first discovery which they should make, they would be serv'd as the unfortunate Galileo was, and perhaps rot in a goal. Oh ye monks! Ye plagues of mankind! Ye scourge which Heaven gave to man in his wrath! When is it that the Deity will, in pity to unhappy mortals, put an end to your miserable race! If thou did'st but see, dear Moncœa, how insolent they are in this country, thou wouldst be surpris'd at the blindness of those who permit and patronize it.

The Recollets are the friars that bear the greatest sway here. They are the heroes of gallantry. Their sandals are ty'd with ribbands green, blue, red, or yellow, according to the colour of the liveries of the ladies whom they gallant. These ladies are they that take care to equip the reverend fathers with shoes and stockings; and there is not one of these friars but has his dear Dulcinea, to whom he pays his vows. The other monks are altogether as gallant; and to be fortunate in an amour at Lisbon, 'tis absolutely necessary to put on a cowl.

The Portuguese are in general better turn'd for trade than the Spaniards; and in their harbours there is a very great number of foreign ships. the English especially drive a considerable traffic there; and many of them are settled in the country, where they enjoy several privileges.

'Tis very much the interest of the Portuguese to be upon good terms with the English; and the latter, perhaps, find it as much theirs to be friends with the Portuguese; the cause and principle of which union is Spain; for as England does not care that the said power should aggrandize itself, the interests of Portugal and those of England are consequently the same.

Before the republic of the united provinces was form'd, the Portuguese had much more considerable dominions in the Indies than they have at present. While they were subjects of the monarchy of Spain, they lost great part of the conquests which they had made in those distant countries, by the wars betwixt that crown and the United Provinces. Nevertheless, they have still very considerable settlements there, both in the East and West Indies; and Lisbon is one of the most trading and wealthy cities in the world.

The women of this country, in general, are as beautiful and well-shap'd, as the men are ugly, ordinary and clumsey. Consequently the fair-sex is debarred all manner of freedom; for the Portuguese are even more jealous than the Spaniards. The women are more slaves to them than wives: They go out very seldom, and the higher they are in rank, the greater is their unhappiness. The jealousy of their husbands is so violent, that they have little chapels built in their palaces, that they may not have the liberty of going to the churches; wherein they resemble the rich Mahometans, who have bagnio's made in their own houses, that their wives may not have the opportunity to ramble abroad, under pretence of going to the public baths.

To this restraint, which the fair-sex in Portugal is kept under, are owing a great many crimes unknown in other countries. The heat of the climate, and that confinement, which is only a whet to desire, make them break all bounds; and it very often happens that a fryar is the gallant of his own sister; for, as to the horrid crime, which is the consequence of such abominable conversation, the Portuguese look upon it as a mere peccadillo, for which they can get absolution by only making a voyage to Rome. The length of the way, and the fatigue of the passage, are but little checks to their lust; and if we may believe the Scandalous Chronicle, incest is very common in Portugal. What
is

is certain, is, that among those who rub the marble at Rome, upon the stairs of St. Peter's dome, which is the penance injoin'd for crimes of this nature, there are ten Portuguese to one of any other nation.

Thou wilt easily imagine, dear Monceca, that foreigners are at some losf for amusement, in a country where the women are so watch'd, and where jealousy is so wakeful. All the diversion that gentlemen can have here, is to loiter all day in some pitiful coffee-houses, or wretched taverns or cabarets, which swarm with whores grown old in debauchery, and into whose hands 'tis almost as dangerous for a stranger to fall as for one of our brethren to fall into those of the inquisition.

A man must have business at Lisbon to detain him there long ; otherwise he will soon be tird with that kind of life, which he is oblig'd to lead here. The Portuguese commonly stay at home, and never stir out but for their business. Their houses are almost as strictly watch'd as the Turks seraglio's ; so that 'tis impossible for a foreigner, how amiable or rational soever, to expect agreeable conversation in their country. The very king's court has an air of constraint and confinement, and every thing passes there with a gravity, directed and regulated by jealousy. The women go to the queen's court, dress'd richly, and cover'd with jewels ; but they are so narrowly observ'd there, that 'tis almost impossible for them to find an opportunity to punish their husbands for the slavery in which they keep them.

Nevertheless 'tis true, that in spite of their precautions, it sometimes happens, that love surmounts all obstacles. 'Tis necessary, for this purpose, to use so much industry, to be so well acquainted with the maxims of the country, that 'tis impossible for a foreigner ever to be happy with a woman of rank ; this being the utmost that a man can expect, who is born and bred in the country.

Farewell, dear Monceca; live content and happy, and prosper in all thy undertakings.

LETTER

LETTER CXXI.

Moncea endeavours to prove the possibility of the existence of Gnomes, Sylphs, Salamanders and Ondines.—Denies the possibility of their having any commerce with mankind.—Some thoughts concerning Satyrs and Fauns.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

Hamburgh.—

YOU know, dear Isaac, how much I was prejudiced against the Cabalists. Shall I own to you my weakness? Since I have been in this country, a conversation I had with a person addicted to the occult sciences, hath inclined me to believe that many things I formerly thought ridiculous, are neither impossible nor incompatible with true philosophy. Not that I approve all that is said by the disciples of Paracelsus. But I think, that tho' it is certain there are no such beings as Gnomes, Sylphs, Salamanders, and Ondines*, yet there is nothing in the belief of them absurd, or contrary to the laws of nature, as most of our modern philosophers pretend. My reasons are these. What weight they will have with you I know not.

In order to deny the possibility of existence to anything, there must be proof not only of its non-existence, but of its incapacity of existence. But I find no proofs of the latter sort against Sylphs, Salamanders, Gnomes and Ondines. What impossibility is there in supposing, that there are animate bodies composed of so subtle and delicate a matter as not to fall under the cognizance of our senses? We admit that they are not strong enough to penetrate the recesses of nature, where the first elements of things lie hid. They perceive none but the more gross

* According to the Cabalists, the Sylphs inhabit the Air, the Gnomes the Earth, that is, within it, the Salamanders in the region of fire, and the Ondines the water.

causes. We can derive from thence no right to deny, that those delicate principles are in being. Why then should we believe, that there cannot be animated creatures, composed of a matter so thin as not to strike our senses?

Before the invention of microscopes, we knew not that vinegar contained an astonishing quantity of worms: we boldly deny'd that there were little fishes in all the water we drank; and yet we have been many years convinced of the existence of all these animals. Since then there is a number of animated creatures in water, which our naked eyes cannot discover, why may not the like be found in the air and in the other elements?

But it will be said, these insects are not concealed from us but through their littleness, whereas it is pretended that the Gnomes, Sylphs, &c. are of the ordinary size of men.

To this I answer, that the height of the Gnome and of the Sylph is no reason why they should become visible, while the parts of which they are compounded are supposed to be extremely delicate. A space of air six feet long strikes the sight no more than one of a foot or of an inch. In like manner, supposing the Gnomes to be composed of a light and aerial matter, their stature would contribute nothing to their becoming visible. Let us imagine a column of those worms which are found in vinegar, extending from the earth to the sky; our eyes without the assistance of microscopes, would not be at all affected by this column, notwithstanding its immense extension, because its component parts fall not under the cognizance of our senses. Thus, tho' an infinite number of atoms fill up the space between the earth and the moon, yet to us it appears void, because the matter with which it is filled, is not discernible by our senses. It is to no purpose, therefore, to oppose the existence of these elementary people, by alledging, that we do not perceive them. It suffices to establish the possibility of the thing, to prove that

great number of living creatures actually exist, which our senses, unassisted, cannot discern.

When we once admit, that the air may be peopled with invisible creatures; it naturally follows, that the earth, the water, and the fire, which are elements composed of parts more easily united, have also in them the power of producing a number of bodies which God may animate, and yet by the delicacy of their parts, they will escape our senses. But, reply the philosophers, we have no idea of these pretended reasonable creatures; we know not how they exist; we are intirely ignorant of their forms and figures, and it is ridiculous to admit a thing of which we have not any notion.

This manner of reasoning, with submission to the learned among the moderns, is far from being conclusive. Have you, it may be replied to them, any more distinct notion of your own soul? Do you comprehend any thing more about it, than that it is a spirit? Do you know what a form or figure it has? No, without doubt. You admit, however, its existence. Why then will you deny that of Sylphs and Gnomes, of which you have a less confused idea than of a spirit? Because whatever is supposed to be material, however delicate it may be, falls under the cognizance of the human understanding.

The wit of a man is so bounded, that it is not only very possible it may not have an idea of certain creatures; but it might even very easily happen, that a great number of knowing people might, nevertheless, be ignorant of the possibility of animals living in water. Let us suppose that a certain number of men live in a country of a dry, sandy soil, far from the sea and rivers, and furnished only with pits. The thing is by no means impossible. In many of the deserts of Arabia, there is only such pits dug by the Bedouins. These men, without doubt, would have no idea of fish, if they did not hear of them from others. They would certainly look upon it as a thing absurd to suppose, that any creature could live long in water, when they saw such land-animals

presently die, as happen to fall therein. I ask if fish would exist the less, or if the reasonings of these sort of people would destroy the cod in the Mediterranean, or the whales in the Ocean?

It is the same thing with respect to the philosophers who deny the possibility of Sylphs and of Gnomes; they know nothing of what passes in the air; their short sight represents it to them as a great wide space, a large and extended mass, and they pretend to judge of what passes in that mass by the ideas they have of a void space, which is intirely opposite thereto. For tho' the philosophers are persuaded that the extent between the Earth and the Firmament is full of bodies; or, to express myself better, is one intire body; yet their sences seem to get the better of their meditations, when they deny the possibility of the existing of these elementary people.

You see, my dear Isaac, the reasons upon which I ground my opinion. As to the rest, I am fully persuaded that we cannot have any sort of commerce with these Sylphs and Gnomes. I say I am as fully persuaded of the impossibility of this, as of the possibility of their existence. Far from giving into the ridiculous tales and chimerical visions of the Cabalists, I affirm, that if there should exist such elementary people, they can never render themselves visible to men, as it is also impossible for men to strengthen or quicken their sences to such a degree as to be able to penetrate what God and nature think proper to conceal from them. I can't help laughing when I hear a Cabalist gravely tell me, 'That concentrating the fire of the world by concave mirrors in a globe of glass, gaining thereby a certain solar powder, which being purified from the other elements, and a certain quantity thereof taken daily, I may exalt the fire within me to such a degree, as to become, in some measure, of a fiery nature.'

The secret for obtaining the familiarity of Gnomes, Sylphs and Nymphs, seems to me not a grain less ridiculous. It consists 'in taking a glass full of air, mingled

mingled with water or with earth ; this is to be left for a month expos'd to the sun ; then the elements are to be separated ; which being performed, we have a wonderful medicine, capable of exalting in us whatever element we would have predominant, and of rendering our senses quick enough to discern these elementary people*.

Good sense and the light of nature are sufficient to shew me the folly of this sort of reasoning, and the impossibility there is of effecting any thing by these Cabalistical secrets. For suppose I would make an acquaintance with a Salamander, of what use would all the solar powder be that I could possibly amass together ? Would it ever destroy in me that terrestrial matter that is every day augmented by my food ? Could it ever get the better of the air, by which I live and breathe ? Suppose I had swallowed ever so much of this powder, a quarter of an hour after I take in a great quantity of air, and my lungs, which receive and reject, my nostrils and my mouth which give it entrance into my body, are the sworn enemies of the element of fire, which I would have predominant over the rest. The same may be said of the other secrets, which tend to render some one element predominant in man, and thereby to give him an igneous or aquatic nature.

The blindness of the Cabalists goes yet a greater length. They assure us, that 'by applying to the navel a little of the earth prepared for obtaining the society of the Gnomes, one may sustain the want of food and drink, without any sort of incovenience.' The famous Paracelsus affirms, that he tried this ; and it must be owned, that he was either a great fool or an impudent lyar, who durst assert so evident an imposture as this is to the face of the public.

I am not astonished at all, when I see a cabalist writing such impertinencies as these, because at the

* The English reader may see this system set in a beautiful light in Pope's Rape of the Lock. If he likes better to read it in prose, he may satisfy himself by perusing Count Gabalis, whence our author borrows his quotations,

same time I discern stories as absurd and as contrary to good sense, as gravely told by the most eminent doctors in all religions. How many lies have been written by our rabbies on the subject of the Satyrs and Fauns of antiquity? Rabbi Abraham really imagined there were such creatures, but that they were imperfect, because God was surprized by the approach of the evening of the sabbath, and had not time sufficient to make an end of them. Among the Nazarenes, Tertullian, Justin, Lactantius, Cyprian, Clemens of Alexandria and Athenagoras, fancied these fauns were angels transformed into this shape for the crime they committed, when God threw so many of them into Hell; and they concluded this fall of angels to have happened on account of their suffering themselves to become enamour'd of women. The Pagans push'd this error still farther; for they held these fauns to be divinities.

Among sentiments so extraordinary as these are, it is impossible that a philosopher who makes use of his reason, should adopt any one of them. They are equally ridiculous and contrary to the light of nature. It may be even that the satyrs, as described by the ancients, never did exist; and that many useless dissertations have been made on the ideas of some painter or poet, who was the creator of these imaginary beings. I am of opinion, that previous to the explaining of a thing, we ought seriously to consider whether it exists, or whether ever it did exist. Descartes has given us a long explication of the perpetual lamps that are to be found in the tombs of the ancients; and we have since been convinced that the fact is false. Democritus put his wit to the torture for several days, to account for wool which he fancied he had found growing on the figs in his garden. He made thereupon a discourse, with which himself and his friends were very well satisfied. His maid, however, diverted herself at their expence, by disabusing them, shewing that all the learned researches of this philosopher was so much study and pains thrown away. It may be the fauns of antiquity

ty greatly resembled the figs of Democritus ; and those who have made dissertations on these half-men half-brutes, would be greatly surprized, if they should find in any ancient author, that they never existed any where but in his imagination and in his writings.

I will not, however, dear Isaac, pretend to affirm, that what is said with regard to fauns, ought to be considered as invented at pleasure ; on the contrary, I believe their existence possible. We read in the life of Paul the hermit, written by Jerome, a famous doctor among the Nazarenes, as also in that of Anthony, another hermit, composed by Athanasius, that these solitary persons had long conversations with fauns ; and that they owned to them that they were not unacquainted with the existence of a Deity*. If we refuse credit to these authors, we find in Pliny, that satyrs are frequent in the Indies. Plutarch assures us, that they presented to Sylla, as he pass'd by Dyrachium, now Durazza, in Albania, a living satyr. The Roman considered him attentively, but could make nothing of his language, his voice being excessively harsh, seeming to participate of the neighing of a horse, and the cry of a goat §.

This passage in history inclines me to think, that all the satyrs we hear of, were no other than monsters produced by criminal converse between mankind and the females of other animals ; and that these crea-

* According to St. Jerome, St. Anthony met with a Centaur, exactly like what is described in the poets. The same author assures us, that not long after this St. Anthony saw also a Satyr, resembling those we see in paintings.

Conficit (Antonius) hominem equo mixtum, cui opinio Poetarum hypocentauro vocabulum indidit . . . Nec mora inter faxosum convalem haud grandem, horunculem vidit, aduncis naribus, fronte cornibus asperata, cujus extrema pars corporis in caprarum pedes desinebat. Hieronymus epistol. iii. de vita Pauli, primi Eremitæ. See also the 4th part of the Secret Memoirs of the Republick of Letters ; wherein the wonders reported by St. Jerome are fully considered.

§ Plutarch in the Life of Sylla.

tures, far from having virtues superior to mortals; had much more of the brute than of the man, not being able to express themselves, but in all respects like the satyr of Sylla. The superstition of Paganism made Deities of these half-men, the Nazarenes will have them to be angels or demons; the Jews, imperfect creatures; the philosopher, seeming to disdain the examination of this question, contents himself with denying their existence, that he may not be oblig'd to explain their natures.

Preserve thy health, dear Isaac, live content and satisfied, and may the God of our fathers heap riches upon thee.

LETTER CXXII:

An examination into the cause of that hatred, which all nations bear to the Jews.—Some memorable instances of cruelties committed by them in France; &c.—The writings of the Rabbins disapprov'd of.—The Jews remarkable for avarice.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Hamburgh—

I Don't know, dear Isaac, to what cause to attribute that violent hatred which all people profess to have against those of our nation. Whatever religion they have, in whatever climate they inhabit, they seem to agree in this point. The Mahommets, the popish Nazarenes, the reform'd, the Armenians and the Lutherans, despise, equally agree in despising us, and carry their despite to excels. I for some time thought that this antipathy might be occasioned by a diversity of belief. But I was obliged to change this way of thinking, when I saw numbers differing in religion, who had notwithstanding the most perfect esteem for each other. The quakers differ as widely as we from the Nazarenes; they have no sacrament, not even so much as that of baptism;

baptism; however, the Nazarenes do not either hate or despise them.

We must look therefore for some other cause than religion, in order to account for that antipathy which all nations have to us. I do indeed believe, that religion influences the lower class of people in their notions of Jews, in some measure; but it is certain, that it does not determine them intirely; wherefore, there must be some particular subject whence the unanimous hatred of all people must flow. Did it come purely from difference in point of faith, why should the Turks hate us more than they do the Nazarenes? Or the latter, why should they detest us more than Turks?

I believe, dear Isaac, that we ought to seek in the evil conduct of our brethren, what we generally attribute to difference in religion. If we credit certain historians, we shall find in their writings, that the horrid crimes of certain Jews have in all times had desperate consequences in respect to our nation. Rigord, physician and historiographer to Philip Augustus writes, that in 1180, our brethren settled in Paris would needs make a sacrifice on the solemnization of the passover, supposing they might draw down the divine clemency, by immolating a Nazarene. They carried off, says he, a young lad of twelve years old, whose name was Richard, the son of a rich tradesman, and after they had almost by whipping tore off his flesh from his bones, they crucified him. This barbarous action coming to the knowledge of the French, all who had any concern in this dreadful sacrifice were put to death, and our whole nation for ever banished that kingdom.

France is not the only country wherein we are charged with such cruelties. The inhabitants of the city of Trent commemorate annually a thing of the same kind perpetrated on a little boy called Simonet, the son of a shoemaker whose name was Simon. The Jews, say they, having stript the Boy, did in the most cruel manner draw out all his blood, in order to make use of it in celebrating the passover, and afterwards

wards threw the carcase into a common shore, which ran under the synagogue. The thing being discovered, the Jews were severely punished, and the Nazarenes shew to this very day, the house in which this villainous act was perpetrated.

I really cannot think of settling my opinion as to these facts, when I either read them or hear them talk'd of. I am thoroughly satisfied, that such cruelties are no where practised in our synagogues at this day, and I can hardly bring myself to believe that they were ever practised heretofore. However, these accounts are accompanied with such circumstances, that it is almost impossible not to admit the matters of fact. But after all, if it were true that there were some Jews so wicked and so furious as to run into excesses of this sort, ought their crimes to affect a whole nation? There is nothing more easy, than the proof that only a few mad and vile people were ever guilty of things of this nature, and that the Jews in general were not only ignorant of them, but if they had been acquainted with such practices would have held them in the utmost detestation. In order to establish this, we need only consider what the historiographer of Philip Augustus says. He assures us, that the criminals were punished with death, and the remainder were banished the kingdom. There were but fifteen or sixteen jews executed; if more had been found guilty, without doubt the Nazarenes would not have spared them. The whole nation thus exiled, had nothing to do with these cruelties. However, by astonishing ill luck, that horror which the crime of a few particular people justly merited, rested upon the nation; and they are persuaded in France, that the Jews in general approve of such detestable sacrifices. There needs no more, my friend, to render them odious to the whole world: What can there be more scandalous to a nation, than to have been driven out of a great kingdom for such abominable deeds?

It is not solely to prejudices of this sort that we ought to attribute the aversion and the dislike which people

people have towards us. The sordid avarice, and the perfidy of some of our brethren, have made us mortally hated. Thus the innocent suffer for the crime of the guilty, and a number of Israelites worthy the esteem of all honest men, zealous observers of the divine law, are without distinction confounded with people whom themselves despise, and whom they are the most ready to condemn.

Our Rabbins ought to apply themselves to writing books of morality. Such works would be much more useful, and do us more honour among such as differ from us in religion, than that monstrous heap of visions which are to be found in most of our authors, and which serve only to discredit our writers and our nation. I would be content to see our doctors attentive in explaining the law, and in applying it principally to the discouraging the practice of those vices most reigning amongst us; inflicting constantly on the heinousness of the act of taking away another man's property in the sight of God, and the baseness of usury in the sight of men. If they could once bring this doctrine to prevail, and could induce our brethren to be less attached to, and susceptible of the temptation of filthy lucre, I doubt not but they would enable them to gain the esteem and regard of all nations. Why should they refuse it us, if we were worthy of it? I have before shewn, that difference in religion is not a reason which determines the esteem or the dislike of men. Besides, dear Isaac, ours hath in itself such beauties, that if the Jews were once become a virtuous people, they would be at least secure of the friendship of philosophers, learned and reasonable men. But far, my friend, very far are the Rabbins from endeavouring to eradicate avarice from the hearts of the Israelites, on the contrary, they are the first themselves of giving examples of sordid covetousness; insomuch, that it may be said of the prayers in our synagogues, as one of the ancients said of those heretofore made by the Pagans: "Do we observe, says he, any go to temples in order to beseech the Gods to give him perfection in eloquence,

or

or to discover to him the secrets of philosophy? Nay, do they so much as ask rectitude of mind or health of body? But of all who go to the capitol, this is the custom, before they reach the very threshold of the gate, the one promises great offerings to the Deity he worships, provided he hastens the death of a rich relation; another, that he may discover a hidden treasure; a third, that he may be lucky enough to acquire a large estate in business * ”

Such are the prayers which most of the Jews offer to the Divinity. They forget that they are forbidden in the law to wish for the goods of another, and the Rabbins, far from putting them in mind of this divine precept, seem to have banished it entirely from their own thoughts. After this we need not think it strange that the Nazarenes have propagated a certain malicious fable against us, viz. That we have made an oath to cheat as often as we have opportunity. They judge of our precepts by our actions. I am sensible, my friend, that the famous Leo of Modena hath refuted with great quickness such as have endeavoured to fix so criminal a usage upon us, and hath well shewn how far we are from following such pernicious maxims, or from regarding them as points of doctrine. But notwithstanding the learned writings of that excellent Jew, there are at this day a multitude of Nazarenes who persuade themselves they do not do us the least injustice in imputing to us this criminal sentiment.

We shall never be able to regain the esteem of other nations, but by changing our conduct intirely, and becoming as remarkable for our disinterestedness, as we are at present for our avarice.

* *Quis unquam venit in templum & votum fecit, si ad eloquentiam pervenisset? Quis, si philosophiae fontem invenisset? Ac ne bonam quidem mentem, aut bonam valitudinem petunt?* Sed statim antequam limen Capitoli tangent, aliis donum promittit, si propinquum divitem extulerit; aliis si thesaurum effoderit; aliis si ad trecenties H. S. salvus pervenerit. Petronius in Satir.

Not that I pretend to prevent our brethren from making an honest profit, or from gaining by commerce. There is nothing more lawful. What I would be at is this, that they should be more sincere, and that uprightness and candour should be visible in all their dealings.

When I have defended this opinion against Jews of a contrary sentiment, and who did not think we were bound to use so much delicacy in our dealings with the Nazarenes, I could never perceive any strength in their reasons. We pay, say they, exorbitant imposts. Princes, in many countries look upon us as so many beasts. They sell us the very air that we breath. 'Tis by dint of money that we obtain a residence among them. In some towns of Germany they oblige us to pay twenty pence an hour as long as we stay. Is not this an astonishing imposition? Are we obliged to act with candour towards those who so cruelly persecute us? And are we not at liberty to make reprisals on the Nazarenes, who thus enrich themselves by our labours?

Whatever at first sight there may seem to be in these reasons, they are entirely overthrown by this single principle, that it is not justifiable to commit one crime in order to punish another. In this respect I find the morality of the Nazarenes admirable. It must be owned that they do not practice it; but it is however one of the principle points of their religion, that we are not to commit evil upon any account. Their civil laws agree on this subject with their religious precepts. It must be owned there are some ultramontane doctors who have maintain'd this impious principle, that subjects may revolt against their princes when they are heretics. But these detestable opinions have been condemned in all nations whose superstition hath not stifled the sense of honour and religion. The parliaments of France have ordered books containing such principles, to be torn by the hands of the hangman, and the universities have

fully refuted them. To say the truth, princes themselves, who are so much outraged by the spreading of such notions, have sometimes shewn no great liking to that zeal with which they have been condemned, which must to thee appear incomprehensible. However, hitherto France and Germany have rejected, with horror, all doctrines tending to violate the respect due to sovereigns.

It is to the love of their subjects that many princes owe the preservation of their glory. While they are absorbed with pleasures, and seem quite to forget the high rank they possess; Rome, always ambitious, and always attentive to the means of overturning the rights of kings, fails not of making attempts against their authorities: But the people being alarmed at the first appearance of a novelty, big with pernicious consequences, oppose thereby so strong a barrier to the ambition of the sovereign pontiffs, as affords princes time to awake out of their lethargy and to defend their rights.

Take care of thyself, dear Isaac, and may the God of our fathers render thee prosperous.

LETTER CXXIII.

Remarks on the writings of an Arabian philosopher, who asserts that men, animals and all living creatures were produced by the sea.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.
Cairo.—

IDivert myself with considering daily the different systems of philosophers, without giving however intire credit to any. I consider them all as probable, but I believe there is none without its difficulties, and in which it is by no means hard to find weak places, if one were inclined to attack them. I leave to a certain race of wrongheads that

that adoration which they pretend to pay to their favourite authors. Whatever the reputation of a philosopher may be, I never suffer it to draw me into a false admiration of him. There are, in my opinion, many things hid from all men, and which the modern philosophers have not a bit better explained than the ancients.

An Arabian of my acquaintance has within these few days lent me a manuscript. I have read it with attention. I find many things in it very amusing: But, upon the whole, I think there is very little instruction to be gathered from the whole work. The author's scheme is this: He pretends, that men, animals, and all that we see invested with life, were produced by the sea. The first fault I find with this system is, that it is directly opposite to the existence of a Deity. As I have an infinite contempt for such blind philosophers as are not struck with this first and apparent truth, so you may guess that there is in this system something very pleasant and very whimsical, since, notwithstanding this capital error, I could read it with any pleasure. See then in few words a brief exposition of this system.

The Arabian author pretends, that there hath happened insensibly a great change in the earth, so that what we now see dry, was heretofore covered with water. He affirms, that the sea and waters wasted by degrees, and the earth being dried by the heat of the sun, did, after many ages, assume much the same form that it has at present.

This is his system with respect to the world in general. Now, let me tell you what he says in particular of man, and other terrestrial animals. When the waters were consumed to a certain degree, and of course a certain part of the earth lay bare, some aquatrick animals accustomed themselves by little and little, to go and brouse and feed upon the grass; that the man, the ox, the horse, &c. constantly went back at first into the water; but in process of time going farther and

farther from the bank, they in the end accustomed themselves to live upon the earth. The sun, by the heat of his rays, quickly altered the texture of their skins, and gave to some of them hair and hides, as we see them have. He pretends, that habit, which is a second nature, did in process of time make the issue of these aquatrick animals incapable of living any where but in the earth. That in like manner, the birds too lost the capacity of entering the waters, because they were not accustomed to it from the time of their being hatch'd, except in such as were call'd sea and river fowl, the parents of which had never strayed far from their mother-element. In support of this extraordinary doctrine, our author reasons thus : " We see that the sun changes intirely the form and colour of men ; children are born white in the midst of Ethiopia, and the first covering of their heads is hair, and not wool. It is not till some days after that they become black ; and there is a very considerable space intervenes before any thing like wool appears. The reason of this is, because men always retain a strong tincture of their first quality ; and that during the time men were aquatrick animals, they were all white, and had none of them wool in place of hair ; but since they have quitted their ancient element, they have been chang'd more or less according as the vapours of the earth, or the heat of the sun have operated upon them.

" All animals, continues the Arab writer, retain even to this day some of their first qualities. There are none of them, but what can swim and live for some time in the water ; the cow, the horse, the dog, and all other creatures swim naturally ; man would do the same thing, if fear did not hinder nature from exerting those motions with which, however, she is very well acquainted. In some seas sea-men are yet found ; the Dutch historians mention a girl who was preserved a long time at Haerlem about three hundred years ago, and who was stopt upon the shore just as she came

out of the sea. In many other countries, creatures have been seen half fish, half of a human form, all which is sufficient to shew, that the element of water is by no means incompatible with an organized body like to that of man; and that there is nothing but habit, and their being accustomed from their birth to breathe the dry air on shore, which hinders men from living in the bottom of the sea."

See, my dear friend, the scheme of this Arabian, who is to this day busy in finding out proofs of his hypothesis. He asked me my opinion. I told him very sincerely, that all systems which did not admit the existence of a Deity, and which supposed as the first principle of all things, a certain arrangement of matter by the hand of chance, would fall into unsustainable opinions, by building a castle on the sands, which the slightest motions must overturn from top to bottom.

It is indeed a surprizing thing, that the philosophers did not perfectly comprehend the necessity of a thing which the most simple people now-a-days clearly see the truth of. The most sublime verities, says an English author*, which were scarce accessable to the brightest and best cultivated wits among the Pagans, are at present become familiar, even to the most confined understandings. This opens a large field of satisfactory reflections to a man who considers things with the eye of a philosopher, and who possesses a soul capable of being charm'd at the mighty progress which useful knowledge hath made among mankind.

What, my friend, would all the Greek and Roman philosophers say, who after thirty or forty years spent in study, acquir'd so imperfect an idea of the Deity? What, I repeat it, would they say, if they were to return to the world, and find every little scholar in philosophy able to shew them with the greatest clearness, that God is not material, be-

* The Spectator.

cause whatsoever is corporeal is subject to division; and whatsoever can be divided, cannot be God. For then either there must be as many Gods as parts, or the Deity must be compounded of certain parts not divine.

The astonishment of these philosophers would still increase, when they were shewn how great their error was in admitting matter to be co-eternal with God. They would learn, that there could be nothing co-eternal with him, since he could not then be Almighty. For not having created matter he could not destroy it. Now, it is equally ridiculous to affirm, that a thing which has no beginning can have an end, or that God can exist and not be Almighty. These Greeks and Romans, of whom some boast so much, would be surpriz'd that they themselves did not make these reflections, or that the prejudices imbib'd in their infancy, and strengthen'd by education, should be able to hinder them from coming at such clear and easy truths.

It is to us, it is to us, Moncea, that the whole world is indebted for the knowledge of God. The first Nazarenes who taught the Heathens the unity and spirituality of the divinity, were Jews separating from our communion. Passion has made our brethren say a great deal of ill of them. However, it must be allow'd that they were truly great men, who hazarded their lives to withdraw the human species from idolatry; if the unity of God hath been preach'd throughout the universe, it is solely owing to them.

When I was a Rabbi at Constantinople I durst not talk in this style. My brethren would have look'd upon me with horror; they would have tax'd me with inclining to Nazarenism, as if one ought not to render justice to merit wherever it is found; and that the difference of belief obliges one to disguise one's sentiments, and to despise people really worthy of esteem. Let us, my friend, leave this madness to narrow minds. It is a conduct only worthy of blockheads and fanatics; and when we

see a man of true genius run into invectives against people of probity, one may boldly affirm, that it is not his zeal for religion, but his ambition, hatred, or some other passion, which moves him thereto. When Paschal wrote his Provincial Letters, he thought less of defending Nazarenism than of outraging the jesuits; and when those people persecuted Arnauld, it was the destroying of their enemy, and not the good of religion that they had in view. Too many divines who dip in controversy, hate their adversaries more than the errors they maintain. It is the same thing with other writers, when they come to differ with each other; they do not criticise a work because it is ill writen, but because it is written by an adversary.

When I was in Germany, I was acquainted with two authors who were continually praising each other. The one was the eldest son of Apollo, the other the darling and the favourite of the muses. After all, they fell out on account of a piece which the one wrote, and the other, contrary to his custom, found some fault with. This was sufficient to sow everlasting division. They wrote against each other immediately with all the vehemence imaginable; they published mutual edicts of banishment from Parnassus, and supported these new sentiments of theirs in all companies with a petulance not to be endured. They blamed excessively those very pieces which they had before as much commended; nor can I conceive how they could, after saying so many handsome things the one of the other, deviate into such scurility and abuse. This conduct, said I to one of them, will hurt you in the opinion of the world. What would you have your readers think of your works, when they find you blaming now what you commended a while ago. They will believe, and with reason, that you commend without grounds, and that you censure without cause. What signifies that, reply'd the author, provided I can but destroy the praises that I have formerly given the man who has had the confidence to blame my writings, I am content.

I praised

I praised him because he praised me, and I censure him because he censured me. If he was to write even better than he did, I will persist always in saying, that he writes nothing worth reading.

This is the manner, dear Aaron, in which authors generally treat each other. There are very few amongst them who commend their brethren without hopes of return. In the republick of letters, eulogies are a sort of goods in which there is always a great trade. I believe it is pretty much the same thing in all other states; when one praises a person, one is apt to be uneasy if he says nothing in return. Self-love is deeply wounded by that silence which mortifies the natural vanity of men, and which seems to imply a mighty superiority in him who receives, over him who bestows panegyrick.

I believe, my friend, that we may lay it down as a general principle, that most men commend from one of these two motives; either that they may be commended, or that they may be rewarded. There are very few, who from the sole principle of doing justice to merit, make it their practice to speak well of the good qualities of others. It is true, that generally speaking, we look upon this noble and generous way of proceeding, as a virtue frequently to be met with; but if we examine things more closely, we shall find that the number of these disinterested people is but small.

Be careful of yourself, dear Moncea, live content and happy, and excuse my writing to you so seldom.

L E T T E R

LETTER CXXIV.

The custom of sending missionaries abroad, commended.—Characters of the Romish missionaries in general, vindicated from the aspersions thrown on them, by the misbehaviour of a few.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Hamburg.—

THE Nazarenes have a laudable custom, which I cannot help blaming our ancestors for not having observed. They go to the very extremities of the world, in order to preach the existence of one God, all-good, all-mighty and all-merciful. There is no country, how barbarous, how distant soever, whither they have not gone to destroy idols, and to insult them on their altars. If these people used a little more softness in their manner of communicating these sublime truths, and if their behaviour were not in some kind inconsistent with the doctrines which they preach, I should look upon these missionaries as the greatest and most deserving men in the universe. Is there, in effect, any thing so glorious, as for men to devote themselves intirely to the service of an infinite number of persons, under the slavery of most absurd opinions, and plung'd in the frightful abyss of idolatry? Is there, I say, any thing more noble than to make the delivery of such persons the busines of one's life? If such as make it their employment to enlighten these unfortunate Pagans, contented themselves with exerting reason and good sense, instead of using force and violence when they have it in their power, idolatrous nations would much sooner be persuaded of the existence and unity of God. But the cruelties which the Spaniards and Portugueze have exercised in certain countries, and which are far from being unknown to other savage nations, give them an extraordinary hatred and unconquerable aversion towards

towards such as come to instruct them. What is it one can really imagine an Indian can think of those terrible executions he hears to have been done by the inquisition at Goa? These folks, will he say to himself, who come to inform me of a God, perfectly good, and merciful in all things, offer up daily numbers of their brethren to this same God, and are continually sprinkling this great altar of his the earth, with the blood of his creatures. They most cruelly commit to the flames, men of the greatest worth and probity, because they have not power enough over their own minds, to force the belief of certain propositions which seem to them contrary to equity and reason. The fierceness and cruelty of a missionary in those countries, where their power is establish'd, hinders the fruit of their arguments, even where they use no other weapons.

You will ask me perhaps, my friend, how it comes to pass that I, who am a Jew, should interest myself in the propagation of the faith of the Nazarene? The answer is easy and natural. It is not the propagation of the principles of the Nazarene religion for which I am concerned, but the propagating the knowledge of the Deity. You know that I have always thought, as well as you, that men might be saved in all religions, provided they were truly virtuous. Now there is nothing so capable of leading men to the practice of honesty and virtue as the sense of a Divine Being, provided it be not clouded, or in a manner extinguished by an insupportable load of incomprehensible and contradictory doctrines, and of ceremonies equally ridiculous and vain. We ought naturally to wish the good, and to desire the salvation of all mankind. We are therefore obliged to the missionaries, who by their preaching, facilitate the saving such as are sunk in idolatry, by teaching them the knowledge of God and of his will. There is no philosopher, of what religion soever he be, who can think otherwise, if at least he does not suffer himself to be blinded by his prejudices, and by an unreasonable

able hatred of those who are not of his own opinion in all things.

It were to be wish'd that when the Jews were dispersed, after Titus had destroyed Jerusalem, they had followed this maxim of the Nazarenes, and had made it their busines to preach and to propagate the law of Moses throughout the universe, instead of keeping to themselves those treasures which they received from Heaven. Had they acted thus, one can hardly conceive, that the number of missionaries consider'd, and the beauty of that religion adverted to, which these missionaries were to preach ; I say, a proper weight given to these things, one can scarce believe they could have fail'd persuading all the nations in the world. What weapons could either ignorance or superstition have opposed to the simple and evident truths they would have revealed ?

The more I consider my religion, the more I am convinced that it is equally reasonable and magnificent. One only God, the creator of heaven and earth, a being infinitely wise and good, who preserves and governs the universe by his power, who will punish the wicked, and who will reward the good. The wicked, who are they ? Such as presume to do unto others what they would not bear to be done to themselves : And the good, who are they ? Such as, not content with avoiding any injustice towards their neighbour, practise also towards him whatsoever they wish he should practise towards them, as my friend the Latin poet happily expresses it in one line :

Quæ tibi vis fieri, facias. Hæc summula legis.

To others do, what you from them expect,
Nor ever this the sum of law neglect,

Here, my friend, is the whole of our religion. All its precepts are contained within this narrow compas. Whatever our Rabbins have added, may be consider'd, if you please, as useless and superfluous. What mortal, who makes the least use of his reason, but must acknowledge the evidence of the truths we declare,

clare, and give them his assent? I repeat it again, my friend, that if we had been possessed of a zeal like that of the Nazarenes, for making known the beauty and sanctity of our religion, we had certainly drawn to us a number of proselytes. But since our people, either through negligence, or which is the real truth, out of a dislike of other nations, hath neglected to make known to them the Deity, we ought, as philosophers, to be charm'd when we perceive that the missionaries have supplied our defect, and have done to mankind that service which we disdained to render them.

Many of the Nazarenes have written in sharp terms against their missionaries; they have reproach'd them on the head of their bad conduct, and have alledged that they have frustrated thereby the good design they went upon. These reflections have made some hasty people conclude, that all the missionaries have been alike wanting in their duty. But this is giving in to an apparent error: We may say without exaggerating, that the good they have done very far surpasses the evil. It is true that some instances may be given, where slips of theirs have destroyed the fruits of many years application. However, the crimes of particular people ought not to fall upon missionaries in general. I own it were to be wish'd there had never gone to the Indies, or into other countries inhabited by idolaters, any but French and German missionaries, bred up in countries where the inquisition is abhor'd. For these preachers, if we except a few of a certain order, seldom make use of any violent measures; and this tenderness of theirs, is much more useful and efficacious in the business of their mission, than the fierceness of the Spaniards and Portugese. One of the last mentioned nation, whose name was Menezes, made several attempts in order to the conversion of the inhabitants of the island of Zocotora; but the extraordinary cruelties he had exercised amongst other people, where he was supported by the power of the king of Cochin, induced these islanders to revolt rather than receive him.

They

They fell into a rage, says a Nazarene historian*, at the very mention of their embracing the religion of the Portuguese. Nay, they carried their aversion so far as to protest, that they would rather suffer death than embrace the opinions taught by those missionaries, whom they stiled a perverse and infamous race of men.

Another missionary, whose name was Alphonso Mendez, demolished all that his predecessors had been doing. As he was a jesuit, his enemies made that a pretext to attack the order. They published several pieces, wherein they accused the Jesuits in general of prejudicing the missions; but in these they exaggerated many things, and in some others disguised the truth not a little. To do justice, it must be acknowledged, that the missionaries of this order have made a great progress in countries, where before their arrival the people had not any right notions of the Deity, and that they commonly behave with a great deal of tenderness. Nay, they are reproached with being but too tractable, and with having push'd beyond its proper extent, their complaisance for the idolaters they had to do with. But whichever way they take it, it is impossible for them to content all people, or to hinder their enemies from finding fault with their conduct. The disinterested part, however, of their adversaries do them justice, and acknowledge that there have been in the Indies, and elsewhere, men of their order of great worth and probity. Let me quote to you what a reform'd Nazarene †, who is of course an enemy to the Jesuits, has said upon this subject. "Christianity seems more effectually settled in China than in any of the countries where the order hath been employed in planting the faith. The Jesuits have had in this mission many great men, such as the fathers

* *Dissertations Historiques & Recherches sur la Religion Chretienne dans les Indes*, p. 304.

† *Dissertations Historiques & Recherches sur la Religion Chretienne dans les Indes*, p. 318.

" Riccius, Martinius, Schalt, Verbiest, and very
 " many others. It would be injustice to refuse these
 " great men the praises which are due to them.
 " For my part, I enter not at present into the dif-
 " futes which subsist between them and the other
 " missionaries. It may be, that the Jesuits are not
 " altogether free from blame; but the conduct of
 " their adversaries is not however void of passion.
 " Do they not evidently shew too great a pleasure
 " in mortifying the Jesuits on account of the insults
 " they pretend to have received from them?"

This passage sets in its proper light the grounds of those reproaches thrown out against the Jesuit missionaries. The hatred which is borne to their order in Europe, extends itself even to those who are employ'd in the Indies in preaching the unity of God. They reproach some with their too great complaisance in China; they object to others their cruelty and their loading the minds of the Indians too soon and too heavily with the belief of mysteries. Thus they condemn in the first what they would have practised by the latter, and plainly shew, that their quarrel with the missionaries is a mere pretence for charging on the Jesuits all the evils that fall out in all places.

I must own to you, my friend, that I have often thought they lay too many things to the charge of these fathers. There scarce falls out any mischief but they are reproached with it. I am sensible that they are vain, ambitious and revengeful; but I know too, that their adversaries are apt to extend things against them to extravagancy, and to load them with imaginary crimes. One Angelinus Gazæus, a Jesuit, hath on this head written some Latin verses, which express very happily this folly of attributing whatever falls out amiss, to that order*. The sense of them is this:

* The Latin verses run thus:

Pomum marito, Jesuiti credulo,
 Porrexit Eva, Jesuitis credula:
 Fratrem Cainus, Jesuitis credulus,
 Occidet Abel, Jesuitis credulum.

Eve, the Jesuits believed,
They Adam made the apple eat ;
Abel by Jesuits deceived,
Cain, at their suit, his brains out beat.

It were to be wish'd, that divines had never answered in any other manner than this, to the groundless reproaches thrown out against them : We should not then have such an enormous load of books, full of nothing but complaints and ill language. For my part, I cannot comprehend how grave people can spend their time in writing such heaps of invectives ; a quick pleasantry like this of the Jesuit, renders a false accusation more evident and more ridiculous than a long pedantick apology. All the volumes that have been written against the Jesuits never gave them so much trouble as the Provincial Letters, where Paschal has continually in mind Horace's maxim,

..... Ridiculum acri
Fortius & melius magnas plerumque fecat res,

If Paschal had refuted the Spanish divines with all the pomp of the schools, the Jesuits had not fail'd, in their turns, to have sent abroad a number of books in defence of their brethren. They would in this case have done no more than mutually embarrass the subject on which they writ ; and after fatiguing themselves and the publick, with a multitude of pieces on the one side, and on the other, which, however, none but themselves or their friends would have particularly examined ; the thing had rest'd there, and the generality of the world know no more than when they began to write. But the thing stands now in a quite contrary state ; the ingenious but malicious method taken by Paschal, hath in six months time made that evident to all Europe, of which all its universities could not convince the publick in a hundred years.

Take care of yourself, my friend, live happy and contented, and may our God bestow on you great and lasting prosperity.

LETTER CXXV.

Moncea in some measure justifies the custom in Spain, which allows children to marry without the consent of parents. — Endeavours to prove that an unlimited authority of parents over children in some other countries, is often the occasion of the latter becoming sacrifices to the avarice or ambition of the former.

AARON MONCECA TO JACOB BRITO.

Hamburg —

YOUR letters upon the Spanish nation, my dear Brito, gave me infinite pleasure, and I wish from my heart, that those which I write you, may prove as useful and as agreeable. I concur with you in your reflections; they are sensible and just. One only appears to me contrary to the law of nature, and contrary to that equality which a philosopher allows to all mankind. You censure a custom which the Nazarene pontiffs approved in a certain assembly*, and which allows a man, in whatsoever state born, freedom of choice in a wife. You say, that such a permission as this, is contrary to paternal authority, destructive of that order which ought to be observed in all states, and of the subordination which ought to subsist in all places, for the good of society. I must own to you, that in this I am not at all of your mind, but on the contrary, admire the wisdom and prudence of these Nazarenes, who, conscious that all men were the children of one father, did not think proper to authorize those chimerical distinctions, which, in process of time, pride, sin, and vanity have introduced. Besides, what is it to the good of

* Council of Trent.

the state, whether a particular person be a little more, or a little less rich, provided these riches remain in the society? Nay, to speak the truth, the more equally they are parted, so much the more will trade flourish. Equality among citizens is the very basis of commerce. In such states as have a nobility aggrandized by extraordinary privileges, trade is more cramp'd than in others. In order to prove this fact, we need but compare the riches of particular persons amongst the Dutch and English with the French and Germans. This will be sufficient to shew us what mighty benefits a people reap by cherishing this equality, and by refusing to introduce those distinctions which break the harmony of society, and by exalting the spirits of particular persons, mortify at the same time others, so as to deprive them of that quickness, boldness and penetration which is necessary to render them successful in trade.

I can by no means think, that custom which prevails among the French, the right of dissolving those marriages which they are pleased to stile unequal, and thereby separating two persons whom love has united, and who, in the presence of the Deity, have sworn eternal tenderness to each other. This is a species of tyranny which is a remnant of those too exalted privileges which the Romans extended heretofore to the fathers of families. These laws in favour of paternal authority have drawn along with them great inconveniences, and by giving to the heads of houses an absolute ascendance over their families, have exposed many reasonable beings to the caprice of one. In vain the old Roman lawyers set up the tenderness of fathers, as an excuse for vesting in them this extravagant power. Fathers, as well as their children, are subject to all the passions, and all the frailties of human nature. How often do we see them hate their children without reason, and foolishly dissipate the estates which they ought to leave to them? How often do we see them sacrifice their families to their ambition?

ambition? And how frequently may we discern in their opposition to their families in a certain way, a secret jealousy lest their children should be happier than themselves.

I believe, my friend, that the duties between parents and children are reciprocal. This is the sentiments of a French poet*. Let me cite a couple of verses which he puts into the mouth of a distressed son.

O cruel parents! Are not your rights ours?
The ties of duty, are they not too yours?
These then shou'd bind, or those shou'd sure be void;
Both must subsist, or both must be destroy'd.

The Romans discovered in the end how detrimental to society this too great extent of paternal authority really proved; in consequence of this, they reduced it into narrow bounds, and took away the power over life and death. Alas! how great the folly, to permit so long that a whole family should be abandoned to the will of a single man, who too frequently made an ill use of his power?

In order to have a proper idea of this wrong use which parents may make of a right over the lives of their offspring, we need only recall to our memory that custom which prevailed over the Greeks, of exposing their children. Where, in this case, was that paternal tenderness so boasted of by the lawyers? What stress can be laid on a disposition which we see may be so far dispensed with as to sacrifice the life of a poor child, purely to gratify avarice or ambition, by affording a large portion to a child already brought up? Do we not at this day see among the Nazarenes many examples of the harshness of parents? How many hapless daughters are sacrificed in order to enrich an eldest son? They are without pity condemned

* Crebillon, in his Tragedy of Radamistus and Zenobia.

to perpetual imprisonment, and under the specious appellation of nun, languish in captivity during life. Are not these, my friend, most sensible marks of paternal tenderness? Can you, after this, think that the natural affection of men is a proper foundation for law, or that any dependance can be had on that innate tenderness which some declaimers have magnified with all the pomp of eloquence.

I am confident, my dear Jacob, that a law which should place children intirely in the power of their fathers, would at least be as unreasonable as a law which gave children a power over their fathers. In a well-regulated state; the power of the one, and the obedience of the other, ought to be fixed. Even the most necessary laws ought to have limits. I am convinced that the head of a family ought to have all the authority necessary to inspire with virtue, and to regulate the manners of his descendants. But I can by no means agree, that if he should forget to be a father, he should still retain a power of punishing a number of innocent persons, to whom he imputes no crime, but the natural desire of freeing themselves from an insupportable yoke.

When one considers attentively the reasons which generally induce parents to cross the inclinations of their children in marriage, one discovers their source either in caprice or in ambition. I have shewn you, my friend, that it is not just to subject many to the fancy of one. I believe I have also offered you reasons sufficient, to prove that equality amongst citizens contributes to the good of society. If to these, you will add the reflections of a philosopher, who not content with regarding all mankind as equals, sets a greater price on the satisfaction of the mind than on all the treasures of the universe. All these things, I say, considered, I flatter myself you will not persist in censuring that decision of the Nazarene pontiffs, which solemnly declares, that men have no right to invalidate such

marriages

marriages as are contracted with the free consent of both parties.

Marriages founded in affection are the most happy. Love, says an English author*, ought to have shot its roots deep, and to have been well grown before we enter into that state. There is nothing which more nearly concerns the peace of mankind than the having a thorough knowledge of those with whom they converse. If this be so, how strong a reason is it for a husband, being well acquainted with the qualities of a woman with whom he is to pass the rest of his days? It is on his choice in this respect, that his happiness or misery for life depend. One may say of marriage what Virgil said of Hell;

With mighty ease, we downwards find the way
To hell; the gates are open night and day;
But oh! how hard and difficult to tread
The paths to heav'ly light, which upward lead?

But when once we are in, there is no remedy left but patience. How well ought we to examine an action which hath such important consequences, and how evidently unjust to deprive a man of his liberty in respect to a thing which so nearly concerns him? When the choice of a husband or wife is left to parents, they have nothing in view but the blessings and advantages of this world; whereas the persons who are themselves interested, regard mostly personal merit. The first would procure all the ease and pleasures of life for the person whose interest they espouse, in hopes that in all situations these advantages may be serviceable to them. The latter fix their thoughts on a continual bliss.

You see, my friend, the different sentiments whereon the fathers of families and their children act. I leave you to judge which is most reasonable. To me it appears, that the satisfaction of mind is of

* The Spectator.

more value than the empire of the universe, with respect to a person who desires to live happy and at ease. The Turks have a much wiser maxim in this respect than the French. They permit their children to chuse, if they think fit, from among their slaves; they regard not in their alliances either riches or ambition, when love stands in the way. The Jews, on the contrary, resemble the Nazarenes, who reject the decision of their pontiffs; they even go farther, for they settle the fate of their children in their infancy. They contract them before they are at years of discretion; and I confess, I know not how it comes to pass, that our brethren are not more unlucky in their marriages than we generally observe them to be.

A father, who forms a project of marrying his son on the mere score of interest, can he possibly know any thing of the humour or character of her he designs for his daughter-in-law, when perhaps he is scarce acquainted with her person? In truth, my friend, I cannot but blame these sort of bargains, believing that affection, tenderness and sympathy are the proper bands which tie in marriage.

I observe in France, and in many other countries, that a peasant is much happier than a man of superior rank; because the former may dispose of his heart as he pleases; but the latter being a slave to birth, must on that account stifle his affection. The examination of her dignity must precede all respect for her good qualities in the woman to whom he inclines; and it must be his first care not to derogate from his nobility, in finding any thing amiable in a person beneath him. So many precautions must render a man miserable. It is natural to avoid constraint; and therefore I have no idea of an imaginary advantage which deprives me of real ones.

Great men have always elevated themselves on this head above the vulgar of their rank. When they have found themselves invaded by the power
of

of love, they have not fail'd to marry as their passion directed. They have never thought themselves obliged to stoop to ridiculous customs; but have raised to an equality with themselves, such as love told them were worthy of that elevation. One of the first monarchs of the world*, distinguis'd alike by the extensiveness of his genius and his dominions, gave a place on his throne to a woman of the meanest birth. His glory was far from suffering any diminution thereby; the world having admired his capacity as a prince, contemplated his conduct with pleasure, as the head of his family, and found nothing inconsistent with that grandeur he stood possessed of, considered in one light, and the tenderness with which he had acted in the other.

I have insisted long enough, dear Brito, on this subject; I would by no means force you to adopt my sentiments, if you judge them unreasonable, but if what I have said appears well founded, then I shall imagine I have not done amiss in arguing against your opinion. Till then I shall remain in a kind of uncertainty. For tho' I can by no means approve placing a boundless authority in parents, yet I shall be very diffident as to my own judgment, if I find that a person endowed with so much wit and good sense as you are, inclines to an opposite way of thinking. There are none but pedants, and the Roman pontiffs, who pretend to infallibility. Philosophers and men of sense are always afraid of falling into errors. They are too well acquainted with the weakness of human understanding not to be apprehensive of tripping sometimes in spite of all their care. Many have pushed their modesty too far, and have run into a kind of Pyrrhonism to express their humility. I cannot help thinking it a little extraordinary, that Socrates should say after thirty years study, "That he knew only one

* Peter Alexowitz, Czar of Moscow.

thing which was, that he knew nothing*." Me-thinks it was a long time to meditate, in order to be the author at last of such a saying.

May you, dear Brito, live always contented and satisfied.

LETTER. CXXVI.

An account of the rise, progress, &c. of many different sects in religion.---Their doctrines and ceremonies.---Principles of a sect called the Herodians, which took its rise from Herod the Great.---People generally follow the religion of the prince who presides over them.

ISAAC ONIS, to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo.---

THE letter, my dear Monceca, which you wrote me on the different sects of the Nazarenes, hath inclined me to reflect a little on those which formerly divided the religion of our ancestors. It seems to me that there is no religion, which once thoroughly established, does not, at the same time that it shoots its roots downwards, demonstrate its strength also, by striking out its branches upwards. In the beginning, these sects are but a kind of sprigs or suckers; by degrees they swell, and at length acquire a bigness proportionable to the trunk from whence they sprung. As they grow and gather strength, they digress farther and farther from the doctrine of their mother church. The chief of each sect forms his system but by little and little, and his disciples again add many things thereto.

It is always gradually, and step by step, that innovators condemn the received religion. If they

* Id unum scio, quod nihil scio.

at once meddled with fundamentals, they would fright rather than persuade people. There is a necessity of preparing them by smaller alterations, for the reception of novelties of a larger size.

The Sadducees at their first appearance, went no further than the Caraites of our days. They contented themselves with rejecting the traditions of the ancients, and stuck close to the written law. The Pharisees, a sort of folks as fond heretofore of chimæras as my quondam brethren the Rabbins are at this day, and zealous maintainers of a thousand ridiculous traditions, were directly opposite to the Sadducees. However, thus far the latter were in the right, and admitted nothing but what was reasonable. But quickly after the love of novelty, and the pleasure of straying in paths far from those of their adversaries, drew them into unsustainable notions. Of Caraites they became infidels and blasphemers, and thereby gave their enemies the Pharisees, as great advantages over them as they themselves were possessed of in the beginning. They deny'd the resurrection of the body and the existence of angels; they maintained, that the soul was mortal, and that there was no spiritual being but God alone*. By this pernicious system, they opened a door to all sorts of crimes, the fear of punishments, and the hope of rewards hereafter, being the ties by which common people are bound to virtue. It is true they did acknowledge God created the universe, and that he governed it by his providence; but then they were of opinion, that he neither punishes nor rewards, save in this world only.

Let me intreat you, my friend, to examine the several sects now subsisting among the Nazarenes, and you will find them come very near in their sentiments to those which were formerly among the Jews. The Sadducees in Judea were what the De-

* Joseph. Antiquitat. lib. xviii. cap. 2. & de Bello Judaico, lib. vi. cap. 12.

its now are at Paris, of whom you have written me so much formerly in your letters, and their belief, as you must observe, nearly the same*. I would not however, push this parallel too far, because I know that the true Deists, that is to say, such as have a proper veneration for the Divinity, do not reject the doctrine of a future state†.

But let us pursue this parallel between the Jewish and Nazarene sects. That of the Pharisees still subsists, and is indeed become the standard of belief among the modern Jews, if we except my brethren the Caraïtes, and a few Samaritans; for I look upon all such as profess themselves votaries to the Talmud, and the traditions of the Rabbins as descendants of the Pharisees. From the destruction of the temple this sect hath swallowed up all the others. The Jews in general have unhappily received all its reveries; so that a thousand ridiculous chimæras, under the name of traditions, have in a manner annulld the holy scriptures.

I sigh, dear Moncea, in the bitterness of soul, when I consider, that except a small number of Caraïtes, all our nation have embraced the grossest errors. Their religion, as it now stands, is an edifice built entirely on the traditions of the Pharisees, and not at all on the books of the law. You are well enough acquainted with the fierceness and pride of those ancient doctors. They looked upon themselves as infinitely more holy than other people, and on this account separated themselves from those whom they styled sinners or profane persons, with whom they would not so much as eat or drink. It was from hence that they derived their name of Pharisees, which, as you know, comes from the word Pharos, which signifies to separate. They carried, however, their point by their hypocrisy in deceiving the people, who are generally

* Tom. i. Let. 4.

† See the Writings of the Baron of Cherbury.

the dupes of such as put on an exterior shew of sanctity.

I find, my dear Moncea, a mighty strong resemblance between the old Pharisees and the modern Jansenists, as you paint them out. These last pique themselves exactly like the first on their great austerity, and endeavour to distinguish themselves by extraordinary, shall I call them, or their odd actions. They have the same veneration for their Austin, that the Pharisees have for their traditions, or their successors the Rabbins have at this day for the Talmud. They are cheats, hypocrites, impostors, and know perfectly well, especially the women amongst them, how to deceive the populace by a fair outside. They make a mighty parade of the severity of their morals, which hinders not, however, their supposing the Epines, the Hemorrhoids, She-Saints, and the Abbe Paris a He-One. In one word, I find them but too like the Pharisees.

The Essenes, who among the ancient Jews were perhaps the only true observers of the law, had opinions very different from those of the other sects. They led a life far more rigid, but at the same time far more sage than any of their countrymen; but notwithstanding this, there was not a speck of hypocrisy in their conduct. They were men truly virtuous, whose moderation and self-denial must appear exemplary, even in the eyes of philosophers. It is true they ran into some very odd doctrines. They admitted absolute predestination, looked upon man as a slave, denied his free-will, and left him no liberty in his actions. "They differed also from the Pharisees about the great articles of a future state and the resurrection of the dead. For tho' they believed the former, they deny'd the latter, maintaining, that souls when they left their bodies, entered instantly into a state of immortality, remaining eternally happy or eternally miserable, according to their actions here, without ever being

ing joined again to their own, or to any other bodies *".

There are many Nazarenes, who maintain at this day the last mentioned opinion of the Essenes, and who believe there is no purgatory, notwithstanding what is said on that subject by other Nazarenes. They say, that when the soul escapes from the captivity it suffers in the body, it enters into a state of eternal happiness or eternal misery. There are not a few who admit absolute predestination; and in short, all who are called Reformed throughout Europe, resemble in many respects the Essenes.

There was yet another sect among the Jews, who were styled the Contemplative or Therapeutæ †. Those who embraced their opinions, said, that it was a motion of the divine love which threw them into a sort of enthusiasm, not unlike that of the Bacchantes and the Corybantes, in their celebration of their mysteries among the ancient Pagans. This fit lasted till they fell into a kind of contemplation, during which they were in an ecstasy. Thence-forward, they looked upon themselves as raised above other men. These people often retired into deserts, leaving their relations and friends, in order to deliver themselves up entirely to seraphic joys.

It is easy to find these Therapeutæ among the mystics of our days. The monks, who leave the world and retire into deserts, that they may have nothing to disturb them in their contemplation, resemble them strongly. The fanatics, or the enlightened, as they call themselves, are also of this cast. They believe, as those people did, that they have received the spirit in a supernatural way; that it entirely possesses them, that they are guided by it in all things, and consequently justified by it.

* Prideaux's Connection.

† Philo de vita contemplativa, p. 668. edit. Colon.

You see, dear Moneca, that I had reason to maintain there was scarce a Nazarene sect, in which might not be discovered somewhat of the leaven of some one of those which anciently prevailed among the Jews. In this manner, the opinions of men succeed each other. After being proscribed for a certain space of time, they again revive, and find again new partizans.

There was in Judea, a little before the destruction of that kingdom, a certain sect who called themselves Herodians, and who took rise from Herod the Great. This sect subsists at this day in all courts. The error of these consists on following blindly the will of their prince, and in thinking that party always in the right which has a superior force on its side. Herod followed this principle in his own practice. Josephus, a celebrated historian of our nation, tho' too much despised by us, informs us, that this prince, to make his court to the Romans, did many things which were not only forbidden by, but were directly contrary to the spirit of our laws. Nay, he digressed so far from the right road, as to build temples and to erect statues for idolatrous worship, which abominable crimes he excused by the obligation he lay under of keeping on good terms with the Romans. His followers adopted his maxims; and the courtiers, those eternal idolaters of a monarch's favour, were almost to a man of this sect; which was thoroughly despised by the more virtuous Jews, and is even now held in abomination, notwithstanding the distance of time, by all such as have a true sense of religion; and prefer the service of God to a vain and fleeting glory. See, my friend, how a Nazarene author has treated these Herodians. "I believe they were like Herod, but half Jews; men who made profession indeed of that religion, but could, upon occasion, accommodate themselves to the pagan idolatry; and do whatever was demanded of them. The Sadducees, who believed there was no life

† Joseph. Antiq. lib. xv. cap. 12.

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" after this, ran almost unanimously into that opinion,
" insomuch that they came afterwards to be confounded
" ed with that sect*."

One may, Monceca, boldly venture to affirm, that the belief of the prince determines that of his courtiers in general, and influences in time that of his people. In effect, it is next to an impossibility that the religion of the sovereign should not in time destroy and absorb the rest. Would it not have been sufficient to have turned all France protestants, if Henry IV. had continued in that religion? Had it been so, I am perswaded there would have been fewer papists in Paris, than there are now of the reformed. For it is impossible, that in the course of four or five generations, there should not in every family be a chief, desirous of honours, offices, and such-like marks of distinction. Ambition, in proportion, reigns equally among great and small. In order to make a fortune easily, a man must be of the religion of his prince. This is an excellent reason in its favour, and an argument very prevalent with the greatest part of mankind.

In order to demonstrate the truth of this fact, we need only consider what is become of the popish religion in the North, and it will presently convince us, that the religion of the prince will absolutely, in time, swallow up the rest: If the successors of Herod had all of them thought as he did, the Jewish religion would soon have been half extinguish'd. The Pharisees themselves would have gone over to his sect; for they had too much pride and vanity not to desire a share in the royal favour. Those who express a great deal of zeal for an opinion, are not the least likely to change it. I have seen many Nazarenes who have writ with much heat in defence of a doctrine which interest or honours hath afterwards tempted them to desert; while ignorant people, and men of a middling capacity have suffered with invincible constancy in defence of their behaviour. It is

* Prideaux's Connection.

not very difficult to gain the doctors of the Sorbonne, in case it become necessary to establish any new opinion in France. By the means of benefices, the sovereign has in his hand the keys of the clergy's hearts. If the Jansenists could obtain preferments to the full extent of their desires, they would certainly make less noise than they do. But the Molinists take all, which will never bring both parties to an agreement.

May'st thou enjoy, dear Monceca, health, wealth and prosperity.

LETTER CXXVII.

The ancient Jews excessively superstitious in observing the sabbath.—The inconveniences and misfortunes this superstition brought on them.—The advantages taken by Pompey over their weakness in this respect.—'Tis reasonable to believe the Divinity will dispense with particular ceremonies on certain occasions.—Prideaux's character of the Jewish resolution at the time Pompey sack'd the temple.—Perseverance in religious matters recommended.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Lisbon.—

TH E superstition of the Portuguese, my dear Monceca, puts me in mind of that ancient severity with which our forefathers kept the sabbath. There was a time when that superstition was push'd so far, that the Jews, by a false delicacy of conscience durst not defend their lives upon that day. If they were attack'd, they rather suffer'd themselves to be slain than they would avoid it by resistance. In the beginning of the wars under the Maccabees, the folly and inconvenience of this conduct became manifest by its mischievous consequences. Men of sense, who saw clearly that the divine law could not enjoin anything apparently destructive of society, decided, that the fourth commandment did not forbid the defend-

ing of their lives when they were attack'd, or found themselves in danger. In thus explaining the commandment, they certainly came nearer to its true sense; but still their explication wanted scope. For after all, they imagined that they were only to resist in case of an attack, and that even this decision did not give them a power of impeding any preparative steps towards the ruin of the publick, or destruction of any private persons; but only a permission to defend themselves at the last extremity. Thus it fell out, that if the Jews were attack'd upon the sabbath-day they made a vigorous resistance; but if they were besieged in a town, they did not think it lawful to hinder the raising of mounts or of batteries. They durst not so much as make a sally in order to drive the enemy from an advantageous post, because in this case they would have been aggressors; and except in a point of the last extremity, they held it a thing absolutely unlawful to oppose force by force.

It was this false delicacy, in a great measure, which gave Pompey an opportunity of taking the temple. He soon perceiv'd the nature of the Jewish discipline, and instead of making attacks on the sabbath-days, he employed them entirely in perfecting his works, in raising batteries, filling up ditches and erecting machines; from which change of conduct he found all the good effects he could desire. His soldiers did their busines so well and so commodiously, that at length they sapp'd a great tower, which falling, drew after it a considerable part of the wall. The breach thus made, they mounted and carried the place by assault. Thus the temple was taken and sack'd; through the blind superstition of those who should have defended it.

Whatever our Rabbins may say, my dear Monceca; I shall never be brought to believe, that the Divinity can expect from men a compliance with a law, hurtful or prejudicial to society. The light of nature shews us, that the Deity intends the happiness of mankind, and that the rules he has given us for our conduct have all that tendency. We ought therefore

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to reject in the celebration of the sabbath, whatever may render it hurtful ; and since from the time of the Maccabees it has been admitted, that resistance in cases of extreme necessity is lawful, we ought likewise to conclude, that we are permitted to do anything which may be needful on that day, to prevent the snares laid by our enemies from taking effect.

The Nazarenes act, in this respect, more wisely than the Jews. They have their sabbath-day as well as we, but they don't observe that day in such a manner as to render it hurtful. They do not apprehend that the service of God obliges them to permit, by a blameable indolence, the destruction of his temple and altars. The Nazarenes say likewise, that in certain laws the letter kills, but the spirit giveth life ; and that they are always to be explain'd in such a rational manner, as that the divine commands may coincide with the measures requisite for the publick good. Necessity may dispense with many things. It were to be wish'd that our ancestors had thought as reasonably on the head of the sabbath, as our brethren do in the country where I live. They are not circumcised, they eat pork, go to the Nazarene churches, sing vespers, and if it be necessary, say mass ; yet remain nevertheless good Jews in their hearts. Of what use would a false and foolish zeal be, which would serve only to ruin entirely the remains of our unfortunate nation in these parts ? I heartily disapprove a fierce and haughty behaviour on certain occasions. It is more allowable to be a little negligent, or even to be wanting to our duty, with respect to one precept, than to hazard an inability of fulfilling the rest.

It is not because I have not a proper admiration of that constancy which appeared in the behaviour of our ancestors that I reason thus ; I own I am struck with it : But what then ? I cannot approve of it. What mortal man but must be astonished, when he considers their firmness ? Josephus and other historians have preserved a full account thereof, and transmitted it to posterity. The Nazarene authors do them

them all imaginable justice. See how an English writer speaks of the conduct of our forefathers at the time Pompey sack'd the temple. " During all this distress, says he, amidst the cries and the disorders naturally attending these barbarities, the priests still continued in the temple, and still discharged the duties of their functions ; they persisted in them with wonderful calmness and steadiness of mind, notwithstanding the rage of their enemies, and notwithstanding the anguish of soul they must feel at seeing their relations and friends die before their eyes, chusing to fall by the swords of their enemies, who were now masters of all, rather than abandon the service of their God. Many of them went to mingle their blood with that of the sacrifices which they offered, and by the sword of the Heathens became victims to their duty. Pompey himself could not help admiring this firmness, this constancy, to which scarce any parallel can be found *."

Whatever contempt other nations may have for ours, I believe, I may affirm, my friend, without breach of truth, that never any people gave more convincing marks of bravery than we have done in fighting against our enemies, or have shewn greater veneration for the Deity. It is true that we have sometimes fail'd ; but who are they to whom the same objection may not be made ? For a nation never to be deficient in any point of duty, we must suppose it composed of men void of human frailty. Where are they to be met with who have resisted such persecutions as we have felt, without sinking under the weight of their misfortunes ? We however remain uncrush'd. We have sustain'd with a patience worthy of the greatest admiration, all the punishments that have been inflicted upon us. We are, as it were, vagabonds throughout the earth, proscribed in many parts of the world, and forced to pay for the very air we breathe, in places which af-

* Prideaux's Connection.

ford us a retreat: Evils, capable of destroying even the constancy of a Stoick. Yet in the midst of these distresses, scarce one in an age can be found amongst us who abandons his belief, and proves a traitor to his God.

The Nazarenes, who blame without distinction all our actions, even such as deserve the highest commendation, give the name of wrongheadedness to our constancy, instead of doing justice to our firmness. Their hatred towards us, makes them so blind that they make crimes even of our virtues. I should be glad if they would inform me, how that which in themselves they stile grandeur of soul and fidelity to providence, comes to be in us obstinacy and hardness of heart? Inasmuch as we are thoroughly perswaded of the truth of our religion, and believe as firmly as they do, why are we more wrongheaded than they? Obstinacy is that vice which engages a man to defend his opinion, even after he is convinced of its falsehood. But there can be nothing more unworthy of an honest man than to change his sentiments in religious matters, purely out of complaisance. It is becoming like certain idolaters in the Indies, who make a trade of their religion in their negotiations with the Nazarene missionaries; they abandon the worship of their idols while the fathers furnish them with a better subsistence than otherwise they could obtain; but whenever they are turn'd out of their pay, away they run to their woods, and to their false gods again.

Consider, my dear Monceca, the several sects of the Nazarenes, which have sprung up in the space of seventeen hundred years, they are almost all extinct. One age hath seen a religion rise and fall, which yet in its day had a multitude of partizans. In this springing and decaying of religions, ours hath suffered no diminution. I am perswaded there are at this day as many Jews scattered over the earth as there were in the world at the time of the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. It seems that heaven is alike employ'd in multiplying them and their mis-

fortunes.

fortunes. If all the Jews who are in the countries of the great Mogul, in Moscovy, in Turky, in Africa, and in the several kingdoms of Europe, were assembled in one country, I doubt whether there would be a more numerous or a more puissant nation in the earth. This shall one day happen, dear Monceca, when the long captivity under which we now languish, shall have its final period. The walls of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt by her children, the holy temple again restored, and the Almighty worshipped therein by his faithful Israelites, in the same manner as heretofore. Let the Nazarenes then go on to boast their own prosperity, and to upbraid us with our misfortunes. He who hath brought us into this slavery, and hath made us stoop to the yoke of these nations, can deliver us when he pleases, and when our crimes shall be expiated, then the Nazarenes shall begin to feel the punishment of theirs.

We may apply to our enemies what an English governor once said to a French general when England was deprived of Calais, the last of the numerous conquests it had made in France. The general ask'd the governor pleasantly, When do you think you shall pass the water, and establish yourselves again here? That we shall do, replied the governor gravely, whenever your sins are greater than ours. If this gentleman was right in his conjecture, then towards the latter end of the reign of Lewis XIV. the French were greater sinners than the English. It is true that Heaven at last pardon'd them, and their enemies quickly pass'd the sea again. It shall be, dear Monceca, with the Jews as with the Nazarenes; whenever they become virtuous, God will put an end to their sufferings. All the different captivities that we have endured are but the effects of our vices, and as these have not produced an amendment, God hath thought fit to continue our afflictions, that he may change intirely our evil inclinations, and render us worthy of being call'd by his name. The longer our slavery lasts, the more agreeable its end will be.

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In vain have the nations conspired the ruin of Israel; their projects shall be all disappointed; the Almighty shall dissipate their dark contrivances as the wind drives smoke away. When our deliverer shall come to break our chains, the earth shall tremble at his presence, and kings shall fall down at his feet; he shall overcome all obstacles, and Sion shall be restored, and become more flourishing than of old. Happy! Happy! Moncea, shall the Jews be who shall then enjoy the light of the sun; they shall see in one day more miracles done than have been hitherto wrought from the creation of the world. They shall contemplate the face of the most august Messiah, resplendent with glory. Perhaps that day is nearer than we imagine. The deliverer of Israel may appear in an instant; it is also possible that happy moment may be far off. God alone knows when it shall come to pass. Let us submit with all due respect to his decrees. Let us adore his holy providence, and let us be assured, that if he punishes us it is for our good, and that in the end he may bring us to glory.

May'st thou enjoy thy health, dear Moncea, live happily and content, and may the God of our fathers grant thee prosperity in all things.

LETTER

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LETTER CXXVIII.

National virtues and accomplishments entirely owing to education.—Politeness and good behaviour ought not to be attributed either to the freedom or slavery of government.—An extract from Wicquefort's Treatise of the Ambassador, &c. to shew the brutish haughtiness of the Muscovites.—Strangers that have gone to Muscovy, have been the means of polishing their manners.

AARON MONCECA, to JACOB BBITO.

Hamburgh—

I have many times considered what it was, which could render some nations so much more affable than others. I am at length perswaded, that it is imply education; and that it is purely the instructions we give children in their tender years, which determines their future temperament, and inspires hem with that politeness which is of so great consequence to society.

Some authors, moderately furnish'd with understanding, have maintain'd, that those are the most polish'd who dwell in countries subject to absolute monarchs*. If we may credit these men, brutality is a kind of necessary consequence of liberty. They compare the politeness of the French, with that sickness and haughtiness visible in the English, and that plain natural behaviour, which is the characteristick of the Dutch and Swiss. But the examples these authors make use of, in order to sustain their opinions, are absolutely destroy'd by others; which very plainly prove, that the liberty of a nation does not at all prejudice affability, or complaisance. The Greeks and Romans, while their several republics were in the greatest splendor, were the people

* See amongst other things, *Lettres sur les Hollandois*, said to be written by Mr. Muralt.

in the world the most civilized; the most polite; while the Persians and the Parthians, slaves to absolute princes, were considered as barbarians.

If we compare the affability of the Venetians with the unmannerly behaviour of the Turks, we shall readily agree, that despotic government is far enough from inspiring politeness; we must look therefore for this cause somewhere else, than in either submission or liberty. For as we see, that some free people have little complaisance, and that under despotic governments there may be found some who have less; and as it is certain, that the Muscovites were heretofore the most restive and the most brutal of all people, at the very time that they were absolutely slaves; we must acknowledge that the idea we are apt to form of a ferocity arising from a spirit of liberty, is not at all founded in reason, but in prejudice: Wherefore we ought to continue our search.

I think, and that with reason, dear Brito, that education is the ruling motive in most of the actions of mankind; they have been more or less tractible, according as they have been more or less cultivated in their youth. When they have been taught early to render themselves sociable, to bend their temper, and to accommodate their wills to those of others, it grows into a custom, and they become insensibly complaisant without thinking of being so. In short, habit is to them a second nature. But, when on the contrary, they are brought up in a full gratification of their passions, and allowed to follow blindly their own humours, their temper becomes more and more restive, and they grow the more and more impudent as they grow in years; the nature of the government they live under, neither abating nor increasing the rusticity of their manners.

The Muscovites are not become more submissive within these twenty years, and they are become more polite. Peter Alexowitz found the secret of polishing their manners and abolishing their ill customs without making them slaves. He made them more sociable, by obliging them to educate their children

in a proper manner. The Muscovite court differs as much from what it was twenty years ago, as the court of France differs from that of Constantinople; and yet I look upon these courts as antipodes to each other in this respect.

The Muscovites were heretofore less polish'd and less affable than the Turks, absolutely ignorant of the laws of civility, and very moderately skill'd in those of nations. The character of ambassador was scarce enough considered amongst them to preserve him who bore it from indignities. Wicquefort, in his treatise of the ambassador and his functions, speaks of them in these terms :

" The Muscovites are void of good manners, " barbarous and brutal ; and tho' birth makes some " distinction between the better and the meanest sort " of them, yet are they all slaves to the Czar, and " through a base and servile education one sees no- " thing amongst them, which is not low, stupid " and clownish. The Czar, or Grand Duke, takes " upon himself the expences of all ambassadors, as " soon as they enter his dominions, and continues to " defray them so long as they remain in them ; but " then this kindness, honour, or whatever you will " call it, is accompany'd with a kind of beastly arro- " gance. For, whereas in all other courts the mas- " ter of the ceremonies, or introductor of ambassa- " dors, does all civilities to publick ministers, and " gives them the place of honour in their houses, " in the name of his master ; the Muscovite pristave " does his utmost to make himself master of that " place, avoids lighting from his horse till the mi- " nister is actually dismounted, throws himself first " into a coach or into a sledge ; and, in short, be- " haves with the utmost sauciness upon all occasions. " There are several descriptions of this court, and " its formalities. Amongst others, a most imperti- " nent one in the account of the embassy sent by the " duke of Holstein Gottorp thither, and into Persia " in the year 1633. But I do not remember any,

" in which this nation is set in a better light, than
 " in that which we have of the earl of Carlisle, who
 " went thither on the part of the king of Great-
 " Britain in the same year.

" The pristave, who received him at Archangel,
 " took the hand of the ambassador, and would not
 " yield up that point, till the governor of the town,
 " directed him to comply with the earl's desire? who
 " was a man of spirit, and would not suffer any in-
 " jury to be done to the king his master. They fix-
 " ed the day on which he was to make his entry into
 " Moscow. He was on horseback, and after he had
 " rode above half a league, they told him it must
 " be put off until the next day, and obliged him to
 " take up his lodgings in a pitiful village. The am-
 " bassador shewed not a little resentment; he even
 " wrote to the Czar upon it in very strong terms:
 " But this signified nothing, they gave him no sa-
 " tisfaction, either on this account, or on the errand
 " on which he came. Nay, on a certain occasion
 " in which they ought to have done him the highest
 " honours, they took an opportunity to offer him
 " the most outrageous insult. The Czar invited
 " him to dinner, but caused him to be placed at a
 " separate table, at a greater distance from his own
 " than that at which his bojars sat, who are in fact
 " his slaves, and were placed on the right-hand,
 " while the ambassador sat on the left. At length
 " he took his leave, so little satisfy'd with the court,
 " that he refused the presents which were offered
 " him, and express'd his resentment in such terms,
 " that the Czar sent an express embassy to complain
 " of him to the king his master*."

Tho' this passage is somewhat long, yet am I per-
 suaded, my dear Brito, you will not find it tedious.
 It proves indubitably, that the most submissive peo-
 ple in the world, may be at the same time exceeding-
 brutal; and it gives us likewise a very just idea of
 the manners and customs of the Muscovites. It is

* Wicquefort de l'Ambassadeur, lib. 1. §. xviii. p. 476.
 true,

true, that within these few years great changes have been made amongst them; but after all, there are many things in their manners that want correction, and to time it must be left to compleat what Peter Alexowitz has begun: After all, to him will be owing the total change of a people so savage and so defective in point of civility.

I have been inform'd by the chevalier de Maisin, when I was at Paris, that he went often to the inn at Toulon, where the young Muscovites boarded, whom the Czar sent thither to learn the arts of navigation and ship-building; they served at that time in the marines. When they first came to that place, there was hardly a day past over their heads but they boxed, and were sometimes ready to draw their knives about who should have the first cut of the meat. They look'd more like bears whelps half lick'd, than men. However, by degrees they lost all their ill habits, and returned into their own countries as polished and as well bred, as if they had been born in the heart of Europe.

The Strangers who have gone over into Muscovy, have done infinite service in that country. Besides propagating the arts, they have shewn the people the absurdity of their old customs. I look upon the French and Germans settled there, as so many missionaries employed in teaching them humanity; and who do infinitely greater service, than those do who run to the East and West-Indies, merely to extend the power of the pope. The first duty of men, next to that of worshipping the Deity, is ministering to the wants of their fellow-creatures. He must have very little charity in his nature, who does not rejoice at hearing of a whole nation being brought to their senses. Tho' I am a Jew, I take part in the good fortune of mankind; and when I understand, that a man travels to augment it; I look upon him as an hero. The world is the country of a philosopher, he ought to be ashamed of that mean and base jealousy, which constitutes what is called national prejudice. I wish with all my heart, that the Swiss

frankness, the good sense of the Dutch, French wit, and English penetration, were diffused through the whole human species ; they would not indeed after all this be Jews, but they would be worthy of becoming such, and I should willingly acknowledge them my brethren. You see, my dear Brito, my sentiments, with respect to the mass of mankind. I don't know whether you will approve them ; but I fancy you are so much above all prejudice, that you cannot but love virtue wherever it appears.

I go from hence the first of next month, in order to pass some time in England. I have already written to Jeremy Costa, to hire for me an apartment in some quiet part of the city. It has been always my care throughout my travels, to lodge in places where, when I thought proper, I might indulge meditation, without danger of being disturbed. In all great cities, and especially in Paris and London, a man who applies himself to study, ought to be as careful in his choice of a lodging, as a man about to marry is in that of his wife ; and for the same reason, his tranquility depending on his choice. It is true, that in France or in England, one may easier change one's house than one's wife ; but after all, when one is once fixed, removing is very troublesome.

I must acknowledge to you, my friend, that change is troublesome to me in all things. I maintain a perfect uniformity in my conduct, and my manner of life is entirely opposite to that of some other persons, who pass their days in a sort of continued agitation. I have often pitied at Paris a number of French people who were everlastingly in a hurry, and who seemed to me as uneasy as if they had been in a place besieged.

To say the truth, an itch of change, and a passion for novelty, are not unlike possessions ; I mean those, which the vulgar apprehend come from the Devil. There are more philosophical reasonings necessary to cure a brain thus turned, than drops of holy water to a Nazarene priest,

who would drive Ashtaroth or Belial out of a body, in which they lay in garrison. After all, it frequently happens, that philosophical arguments do no more good in one case, than ecclesiastical ceremonies in the other; so that both maladies remain incurable. This case is common at Paris, where one half of the smarts are as thoroughly fixed to their follies, as the convulsionists are to their diseases. You will be astonished, my dear Brito, at seeing me treat these people like demoniacks; but to speak sincerely, I don't know what else to call them. What name can one give to a sett of people, who commit all sorts of extravagances with an air of mystery. You will say perhaps, that if the thing be so, I call those demoniacks who ought to be called cheats and impostors. It may be so. I leave it entirely to you to decide that question.

May God grant you, dear Brito, health, content and happiness.

LETTER CXXIX.

Some considerations on the merit of sovereign princes of ancient and modern date.—The author pays greater deference to the excellencies of Henry IV. of France, than to any other prince.—The characters of Pompey, Cæsar, Anthony, Augustus, &c. and also of William III. of England, Lewis XIV. Czar Peter, Charles XII. of Sweden, &c.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Hamburgh.—

THERE is nothing more disputed, than that preference which ought to be given to the memory of sovereign princes distinguished by their virtues;

virtues; and it seems a thing not yet decided whose name should stand first in this list. For my part, dear Isaac, I know none so worthy of that post of honour, as Henry IV. king of France. All the other princes, of whom men talk so much, if they had many good qualities, have also had many bad ones; and there is not one amongst them who has not tarnished the lustre of his virtues, not only by a light fault, but by some considerable excess, incompatible with humanity and the character of a man of worth. You may not perhaps have reflected thoroughly upon this subject, I will therefore give you evident proofs in support of my opinion, by running over all the heroes of antiquity, glancing also a little on the moderns.

If we go as high as the fabulous times and the siege of Troy, and take upon us to examine the heroes of Homer, we shall find them a company of hair-brain'd, proud, cunning, or perjured persons. Achilles is a head-strong creature, who suffers half the Greeks to be knock'd o' the head to no purpose; so great a brute that he outrages the corpse of Hector, whose valour he ought to have honour'd: None but mean and base minds insult over a vanquish'd enemy. Agamemnon was the hangman of his family, he sacrificed his daughter to his own ambition. Ajax was a madman, Ulysses a cheat, Telemenes the murderer of his son. In short, without doing the least injury to these ancient heroes, we may safely say, that the very best of them could not be stiled a man of probity.

But without dwelling upon these times of fiction, let us look a little into the conduct of the greatest monarchs in the universe. What crimes did not Alexander the Great commit in the last years of his life? What is there gross or abominable, into which he did not run? He butcher'd his friends with his own hand, he caused his best captains to be put to death, he gave himself up to drinking and debauchery; and many a man has been broke upon the wheel, for a less horrid mur-

der than that of Clytus. I do not know, whether I ought to put Marius and Sylla into the rank of sovereigns; but this I know, that while they were at the head of the Roman republick, they committed more villanies, robberies and murders, than were ever perpetrated by the Miquelets in Catalonia, or the Camifars in France.

Pompey and Cæsar were two illustrious highwaymen, who disputed for a long time which should have the honour of robbing his country. Both abused the powers granted them by the republick, and whatever pompous titles their partizans might give them, it is impossible for us to consider them in any other light than as destroyers of their country. The one thought of enslaving it, under the pretence of defending it; the other pretended a right to it, in revenge for the injuries done him.

Anthony, Augustus and Lepidus, made the earth and the sea blush, by their bloody proscriptions. I look upon them as three knights of the road, who, on the death of their captain, shared his booty among them, and a little after fell to quarrelling among themselves. It is true, that Augustus in the latter part of his life behaved well; but had he been a private man he would have been hang'd many a fair day, before his penitence appeared. The Nazarenes have a proverb, (When the Devil grew old, he turn'd Hermit:) This was his character to a hair.

Let us now quit the heroes of antiquity, and come to those of later times; among whom, I own we shall find men of greater worth; but none of them without their faults, and those very considerable ones too.

Francis, the first king of France, had a thousand virtues. He was good, generous, sincere; but with all these good qualities he was certainly false to his word, after he was delivered from his captivity in Spain, and paid for that time the emperor Charles the Vth in the coin which he had more than

than once received. That great emperor, with all his virtues, could not boast of much sincerity, and his greatest admirers must allow this considerable deficiency.

Times within our memory have produced four heroes of different virtues, all of them endowed with great good qualities, which each of them sullied by some notable defects.

The first of these heroes is William the third, king of Great-Britain, who had without doubt very shining properties, which would have appeared however brighter in the eyes of posterity, and have been more considered by men of true good sense, if he had never contributed to the dethroning his father-in-law. What does the world say of a man who lays his hands on his father's goods, and obliges him to run about in a miserable manner, begging his bread?

Lewis the XIVth, is the second of those heroes. He was good-natured, magnificent, hated cruelty, loved learned men, and encouraged the arts and sciences, so as to render them flourishing in his dominions. His enemies continually objected his exorbitant ambition; and yet it is not difficult to justify him upon that head, at least to excuse him. He had good reasons for punishing the Spaniards, who, for a long series of time, had endeavoured the destruction of France. If he aggrandized his kingdom, nothing can be plainer than that in augmenting his proper glory, he augmented also the good of his People. His ambition and his conquests therefore, may be well enough approved. In short, he had equal'd Henry the IVth. had he never taken the advice of the Jesuits, or set his eyes on madam Montespan. To take a woman away from her husband, and to be so far governed by priests, as to drive out of his dominions by their advice, people to whom the house of Bourbon had infinite obligations, render'd it necessary for Lewis the XIVth to have all the

great

great qualities he stood possess'd of, from preventing his fame from being utterly destroy'd by those two most remarkable slips in his conduct.

I know very well, my dear Isaac, that the politicians excuse the banishment of the reformed, by the necessity there was of having but one religion in France, in order to establish its tranquility on a firm basis. I must own, that these reasons have a great deal of weight. However, in exiling the protestants, there was no necessity of having recourse to as many murders and proscriptions, as ever render'd a triumvirate infamous. I own too, that it is said, that Lewis the XIVth was totally ignorant of all these cruelties; and that being as he was of a humane disposition, he would undoubtedly have hinder'd, had he known any thing of the matter. But, granting this, he was still responsible; because he was so weak as to give himself up to the pernicious counsels of monks and devotees.

The character of the late Czar Peter the first, is, properly speaking, a mixture of magnanimity and cruelty, of virtues and vices. Let the world say what they will of his glory, I shall never be brought to believe, that his intractable fierceness was a virtue, or that a father ought to reckon among his illustrious actions the death of his son.

Charles the XIIth of Sweden, had a surprising courage, and with it a multitude of other great qualities; but he push'd his revenge to extremity; and perhaps God himself, by that chain of evils which follow'd after the battle of Pultowa, punish'd in this world his cruelty towards Patkul, which was the more inexcusable, considering the character with which he was cloathed.

All these heroes of whom I have been speaking, and whose characters I have ventured to examine, must be at least allowed to have tarnished the lustre of their virtues, by capital errors. Henry the IV th had no failings, but such as are incident to human nature. He vanquish'd his enemies, and as soon as he

he had done so, he generously forgave them whatever they had done amiss. He conquer'd himself his own kingdom, and made war only to recover what was justly his due, and to drive out those enemies who came to attack him in his own dominions, and to foment troubles and divisions among his subjects. He was the father of his people ; the widow and the orphan always found an asylum at the foot of his throne. He loved women, but not like Lewis the XIVth. He was in that so good and so perfect, that if in the times of idolatry, when illustrious princes were ranked amongst the Gods, he had been there placed, I believe I should have wanted an extraordinary measure of divine grace, to hinder me from entering the temple of Henry the IVth, and burning incense on his altar.

France is at this day governed by a prince, who may perhaps one day rival the greatest king of his race. He has already shewn us good-nature, generosity, clemency and discretion, almost beyond comparison; so many good qualities ought surely to be considered as an earnest, that other virtues shall appear when occasion calls them forth.

The Nazarenes have a custom of praying devoutly in their churches for the safety of their king. They intreat providence daily to preserve him and render him prosperous. Who could have imagined, all this considered, that the best king in the world should be assassinated in the midst of his people, to whom he was a common parent ? O strange ! O hapless instance of the folly and frenzies of men ! Lewis the XIth met with few rebels amongst his subjects. Henry the IVth found amongst them enemies the most cruel.

The best kings have seldom met with proper returns from their people. It seems as if severity was the sole method whereby fear and reverence can be impressed on the crowd ; mean and servile creatures whom only a rigid and inflexible administration can govern. The kindness and clemency of the present king of France, hath served but to increase the fierceness of the Molinists, and the malignity of the Jansenists.

Jansenists. Confident of impunity, they have from time to time committed the most unpardonable offences.

It is not long since a prelate, whose name is Lefiteau*, who had been a Jesuit before his promotion to that rank, compos'd a book, intituled, An Answer to the Aneccotes on the Constitution Unigenitus. In this piece, in refuting the sentiments of the Jansenists, he has run into the most outrageous invectives against persons the most venerable; and not contented even with this, hath treated very unadvisedly of the rights and privileges of the kingdom. The king was content with simply condemning the books, forbidding the sale thereof; and directing, that all who were possessed of copies, should bring them to persons who were appointed to that end, by an arret of council. Without question, my friend, you apprehend that the prelate, struck with the kindness and clemency of his prince, hath ever since behaved with more caution. Nothing like it. Some months after the condemnation of his work, he published a sequel, written in the very same spirit; this was again condemned by another arret of council. Maugre all this, our prelate is again at work, and will, in all probability, publish another volume by way of continuation to the anecdotes.

To say the truth, dear Isaac, subjects are sometimes apt to abuse the good-nature and compassion of their princes. There is not, in my opinion, any boldness equal to that of some ecclesiasticks. They will sometimes undertake the most extravagant things. That consideration, which they think is due to their character, gives them spirit enough to undertake anything, insomuch that they execute with assurance what other people would not so much as suffer to enter into their heads. One may safely say, my friend, that in all religions the greatest happiness which can possibly attend the society, is to have men of wisdom and of peaceable dispositions for their priests. Eccle-

* Bishop of Sisteron.

fiasticks are in states what emeticks are in medicine; nothing more useful when apply'd properly, nothing so dangerous when administred mal-propos. A prelate of probity, an honest parson, a prudent minister of any church, a virtuous rabbi, are inestimable treasures. But what mischiefs do they occasion when these people give themselves up to work evil?

May'st thou, dear Isaac, enjoy content, happiness and satisfaction, as long as thou enjoyest life.

P. S. It is proper that I should take notice here of a thing which will be thought ridiculous by such only as know not the mighty impression which the actions of truly great men stamp on hearts sincerely addicted to virtue. I have twenty times, when passing the Pont-neuf at Paris in the night, on seeing his statue, felt so affecting a remembrance of the rare qualities of Henry IV, that I could not avoid going up to the iron-rails, and kissing them with infinite respect. I must too own, that once or twice, I have burst there into tears. I know there are some people who will call this folly, but I must tell them that I despise alike their censure and their approbation. The descendants of those who reached the knife to that august monarch's breast, can have no idea of the sense honest people have of his fate. The difference between them and me is this; I salute, with proper respect, the statue of a great and good king, while they superstitiously, and with a silly veneration, kiss the relicks of some doting monk or canting hypocrite.

LETTER CXXX.

A description of the Egyptian tombs.—A pleasant story of madam Nichon and her husband, by way of digression.—Pyramids are erected only to the honour of kings and grandees.—The reason which the Egyptians have for embalming.—The body of Alexander the great was embalmed, and preserved entire to the time of Augustus.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo—

IT is some time, my dear Monceca, since I left off speaking to you of the manners and customs of the ancient Egyptians : But I am now going to communicate to you what I have observed most curious in their tombs. I have examined many, and in all have met with what abundantly satisfied my curiosity.

There lies stretched on the banks of the Nile, a sandy plain, which is, as it were, the general burying-place of this nation. It is full of sepulchres; many of which have been opened. There are found in most of them mummies in chests or coffins, which are still intire. Near these coffins are frequently found the images of those Gods, to whom, while living, the person was most devoted. Thence is evidently derived a custom amongst the Turks, of having certain sentences out of the alcoran interred with them, as also that practised by some superstitious Nazarenes, of having the images of their patrons buried with them : Thus you see this vain and silly notion is far from being new. After this manner superstition is perpetuated, and one religion adopts the chimæras and puerilities of another.

The method in use among some of the Nazarenes, of placing in their church certain images, ex voto, in discharge of their vows, is in like manner taken from the Egyptians and the Greeks. When they had either suffered shipwreck, or very narrowly escaped

some great danger, they caused it to be represented in a piece of a moderate size, and when, by shewing it, they had excited the charity and compassion of the people, at last they dedicated it in the temple of that divinity to whom they thought themselves most indebted for their preservation.

What in this respect was done two thousand five hundred years ago, is practised at this day. The saints, male and female, have taken place of the Gods and Goddesses. St. George supplies the room of Mars; St. Anthony that of Pan, St. Lucia stands for Diana, and St. Cecilia for Minerva. There is no corporation, no company of tradesmen without its patron. The Shoe-makers have St. Crispin, the Taylors, St. Placidus, the Rope-dancers, St. Panteleon. Tho' these last were never regularly incorporated, yet the danger they stand exposed to, of breaking legs and arms, hath obliged them to look out a patron for their whole fraternity.

When I was at Venice, I was often in the churches of the Nazarenes, the walls of which were covered with thighs, and heads, and hands, and arms, and feet, &c. all made of wax, and consecrated to the saint unto whom the church was dedicated, in acknowledgment of miracles supposed to have been wrought by him. This formed at once the most pleasant, and withal, the most whimsical sight in the world.

A Nazarene, who had not much faith in legs of wax, told me a pleasant story when I was in Germany. He inform'd me that one Michon having had the good luck to marry his sweetheart, exerted himself in an extraordinary way for some months after their nuptials. He had a sound constitution; the accomplishment of his desires added to his vigor, and madam Michon thought herself exceeding happy in her choice. However, an unlucky accident came suddenly to damp the felicity of this happy bride. Mr. Michon, who was neither a saint nor a true lover, used to stray now and then, believing it incompatible with the character of a smart, to be con-

fin'd like the vulgar. One evening having supp'd with his friends, and the wine putting odd notions into his head, he went to a certain temple of Venus, where he offered, according to the custom of the place, and brought away a flaming return. Mr. Michon, however, perceived it in time, and being excessively embarrassed, imposed on his wife a course of abstinence, equally unusual and unsatisfactory. She endured for some time this misfortune without speaking, but at last, losing all patience, she ventured to enquire the reason of his behaviour in the following terms. "I cannot conceive, said she, Mr. Michon, whence your indifference proceeds; but I am very sensible that for some time past we have lived together pretty coolly". This discourse perplexed the husband not a little, he would not on any score tell the matter of fact; and yet finding it necessary to say somewhat, he first fetched a deep sigh, and then in a faint voice proceeded thus: 'Alas! madam Michon! I have met with the saddest accident! The poor woman alarm'd at this introduction, pressed him to explain himself. Is it so, cry'd she, that you have still your secrets; what then is become of that eternal affection you swore to bear me? I am going continued he, to inform you of an adventure which has driven me almost to despair. I went some days ago with a few friends to a country place not far from town. There walking about, I attempted to jump over a ditch, and my foot slipping,—I can scarce tell you the rest. I made such an effort to save myself, that I quite strain'd not my leg or my ankle, but a part of far greater consequence. O mercy! exclaim'd madam Michon, what is it you tell me? Is it possible? Yes, my dear spouse, return'd Mr. Michon, there is nothing more certain. But bad as it is, my malady is not without remedy. An eminent surgeon, under whose care I am, assures me, that in six weeks I shall be certainly cured, without retaining the least inconvenience from the accident. O rejoin'd the lady, you have quite revived my spirits, I was afraid your illness would have been

far more stubborn and dangerous. We must, however, neglect nothing which may contribute to your cure; I'll go and offer a vow to St. Panteleon. 'Tis to him we address in case of broken bones or strain'd sinews; I doubt not, but by his assistance, to see you speedily recovered. Madam Michon made haste to execute her design. She made the figure of the part afflicted in wax, and then away she hurried to the church of the Cordeliers, to have it exposed in an honourable place. A young lad carried the offering in a basin covered with linen. The monk who performed the ceremony removing the cloth, was surprized at the sight, and turning away his eyes, 'Carry away that, said he to the boy. Father reply'd the child, in a soft tone, it is the vow of madam Michon. Carry it away, I say, cry'd the monk hastily, and tell her, we have incomparably better in the convent.' Thus madam Michon's vow lost its place, but her husband recovered speedily for all that.

The Nazarenes are the first in turning their own superstitions into ridicule: But they continue slaves to them for all that. This, dear Moncea, is an evident proof that there is little solidity in their judgments. I cannot well comprehend how folks act commonly directly opposite to their manner of thinking. One is surprized to see the most extravagant things done sometimes by men who discourse very reasonably. When one hears these people talk, one is apt to imagine that they were intended for the instructors of mankind; yet, upon examining their conduct, the man of sense is lost, we discover in his stead, the bigot, the furioso and the debauchee.

I now return, my friend, to the tombs of the ancient Egyptians. You know that the pyramids which are so famous, are the monuments of kings. The grandees of the kingdom followed their examples, and caused those to be erected which are distinguished by the name of the lesser pyramids, and lie along the side of the river. As for private persons they were interred in the catacombs which are very numerous

numerous in the sandy plain situated in the neighbourhood of the southern pyramids. When they were interr'd in these tombs, they covered the stone which closed up the entrance four or five feet deep with sand, which contributed not a little to the preservation of the bodies, by securing them from the injuries of the exterior air. Over and above this precaution, there was no Egyptian but was embalmed after his decease, in a manner more or less costly, according to the abilities of his heirs.

Superstition was also the cause of all this care about funerals. The priests assured the people, that in a certain period of years, an entire revolution would happen, and those whose bodies could be preserved to that time, would have them restored and live in them again. Every one, from that self-love which is inherent to man, being desirous of finding at that time his old case, directed his heirs to take all imaginable care of their bodies. What astonishes me is, that the hump-back'd, the lame, the blind, and every other maim'd kind of folks, had as strong an inclination as the rest, to inhabit a second time so incommodious and so disagreeable a lodging. It is apparent from hence, that these Egyptians did likewise believe, that when the body was once destroyed, there was no getting another. However, 'tis certain, that all this pains was taken for the cabinets of the curious, and the apothecaries shops of the present times.

Amongst the bodies of deceased great men, which had been preserved through many ages, and were actually intire in the time of Augustus, historians mention particularly that of Alexander the Great. They tell us farther, that Augustus being in Egypt had the curiosity of going to see the tomb of that famous prince, and that he saw therein the body in a shrine of glass substituted in the room of one of gold, which was taken away by Seleucus Cybiosaetes*.

* Suetonius in Octav. cap. xviii. Dion. Cass. lib. i. p. 454. Strabo, lib. xvii. p. 794.

'Tis idle, dear Moncea, for sovereigns the most potent and the most dreaded, to dream of respect being paid them after death. Time delivers men from that servile attention which living princes exact; and the tombs of the old Egyptian kings, that of Alexander, and other heroes of antiquity, have been violated with as little ceremony as those of private men. They were not so much as spared in times wherein their memories were recent. We adore, in a manner, living princes, and crowds of flatterers continually pursue them with vows for their prosperity; But,

When breathless, they are dust become,
And all the glories of their pride,
Are shrank within the silent tomb,
Tho' for its splendor it be ey'd,
Yet they are low and lost indeed,
And hungry worms upon them feed.

There all their swelling titles lose,
Givers of peace and thunderbolts of war;
And as no more they can their bounty use,
There free from flatterers they are.
Nature makes equal in their graves,
Whom fortune made or lords or slaves †.

See, my dear Moncea, what becomes of monarchs the most potent and the most redoubtable! It is impossible to express the sudden, the certain fall of human greatness better than Malherbe has done. The first time I read over the works of that inimitable poet, I was prodigiously struck with these lines. A native of France, settled at Pera, made me a present of his writings; which I have constantly preserved with the greatest care, as scarce inferior to those of Horace.

Take care of yourself, dear Moncea, live content, happy, and without care; and let me hear from you sometimes.

† Malherbe.

LETTER

LETTER. CXXXI.

Reflections on the assassination of Henry IV. of France; and some other sovereigns.—Monceca gives the characters of two persons who are about to embark with him for England, one of whom is a great admirer of musick, the other a metaphysician—An altercation that happen'd between them.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

Hamburgh—

IN my last I wrote you my sentiments concerning those great princes, who are in some measure deify'd by posterity; and I then ventured without ceremony to give Henry IV. of France, preference before them all. I have often reflected since that time on the reasons which induced my so doing; and the more I consider them, the more I am perswaded that I was in the right in so doing. I have so thorough a sense of the great virtues of that monarch, that I make no question but heaven design'd the punishment of France by the civil wars, and other mischiefs she endured, during the minority of Lewis XIII. for the little care taken in avenging that terrible parricide. They contented themselves with punishing the assassin; and the los's of so great and good a king, was follow'd only by the execution of a single villain. On such an occasion, all, who by their practices or by their discourses had promoted so abominable a fact, should have been wafted together to their long homes, through a sea of blood. All the proscriptions of the triumvirates which made Rome itself tremble, would have been justifiable at such a time; and there ought to have been offered on the tomb of that generous prince every person, on whom a just and well-grounded suspicion could have been fix'd.

It seemed as if Heaven reserved the punishment of this crime to it self, in order to render it more terrible
and

and to exert itself on such occasions in an extraordinary manner: For so it is, that providence rarely permits assassins to escape even in this life their deserved rewards, especially when it is a prince, on whom their cruelties have been exercised. The murder of Cæsar is a pregnant instance of the truth of what I say. History informs us, that of sixty persons who conspired against him, not one died a natural death. They all perished miserably, and with all the circumstances of horror that can be conceived. Cassius, who was the last, met a fate as melancholly as that of the rest *. The Deity, always careful and attentive to the safety and tranquility of men, seems to have bound himself to punish even in this world such wretches as dare attack the persons of princes.

Reflect, my dear Isaac, on a thing which is not more strange than true. Almost all the Nazarene monarchs who have been assassinated, have met with their fate from the hands of monks, or from persons influenced by them. It was a Dominican who poison'd the emperor Henry VII; and in the performance of that execrable fact, he had recourse to the most sacred rite in his religion. Another monk of the same order plunged his poniard into the breast of Henry III. of France. A Jesuit solicited **, and at length influenced a crackbrain'd youth † to attempt the murder of the best king in the world ‡. What ills may they not perpetrate, when assembled in a body? and yet those who ought most to hate and to detest them, suffer them to throng about their persons through an excess of weakness. We are told, that Lewis the XIIIth, of whom I was speaking to you, trembled when he saw a monk, and did not care that they should remain long in his presence. I readily believe this; but you may rely upon it, that even to this day monks are forbid to enter the castle of Versailles without permis-

* Plutarc. in Cæsare. Sueton. in Jul. Cæs. cap. lxix. Eutrop. lib. vi. circa finem.

** John Guignard.

† John Chatel.

‡ Henry IV.

sion, or to come any where else where the king is. I was informed of this, when I was at Paris; and I am positive, as to the fact.

In spite of all these marks of contempt, which are shewn towards the monks on certain occasions, I think we may justly apply to them what Tacitus says of astrologers, against whom they continually issued edicts, in order to drive them out of Rome, and yet kept them there notwithstanding †. But this is a business belongs to the Nazarenes, and not to us; if they have a mind to be governed by monks, what have we to do to find fault; let us leave them in their infatuation, and proceed to a more entertaining subject.

I am soon to imbark for England, with two men of very different characters; the one is an extravagant admirer of the Italian musick, a great traveller for the sake of improving himself in this science, and who has been actually in Italy for that purpose a considerable space of time. He never speaks of anything but concerts, symphonies, virtuosi, sonatas, motets, cantatas, &c. The other is a metaphysician, everlasting in the clouds, and who employs all his time in reconciling the systems of Descartes, Gassendi, Locke, and Mallebranche. He is disturbed in his conversation, so as to appear distracted; and sometimes one can scarce get four words out of him in a whole day. One sees him frequently stamp, bite his nails, scratch his head; and when the question is very intricate, you would think by his distortions that he laboured under some very terrible distemper. It happens now and then that in the midst of his profound meditations, our lover of musick consults him on the beauty of a new air; Sir, says he, do me the favour to give me your opinion of this song. Upon this he falls a singing, and whilst he is a quavering Italian, the metaphysician shrugs up his shoulders, turns up his eyes towards Heaven, and from the

† *Genus hominum potentibus infidium, sperantibus fallax,
vad in civitate nostra, & vetabitur semper, & retinebitur.
Facit. Hist. lib. I.*

bottom of his heart wishes song and songster bot at the Devil. He endeavours to get away, and shelter himself in another room; but the man of song to prevent this, seizes his arm. ‘ Ah, dear Sir, say he, don’t stir, let me sing that verse over again! — Well! Is it not fine? — Without question, the Vindi is a great man! I protest, I would rather have been the author of his Artaxerxes, than be him of Corsica. Speak truth now, Sir, and acknowledge that philosophers make but a mean figure in the world, when compared with musicians.’

These last words bring the metaphysician to his senses, and how much soever he was buried in thought he could not endure with patience to hear these great men run down, of whom he thinks it his honor that he is a disciple. ‘ You think then, says he, with a disdainful smile, that a musician ought to receive a deal of respect in the world, and that there is a great deal of knowledge and genius requisite in order to fit Re, Ri, Ma, Sol,. Go, go, Sir, you only bandy Hark you, I will tell you of what use musick is in the world. It serves for —— nothing; or, most, it serves only to amuse a few poor giggling girls, and effeminate petit maitres. But philosophy instructs men how to behave wisely. This gives the purity of manners, teaches them to bridle the passions; there is no secret in nature, which it does not unfold. In a word, it employs our wits, and satisfies our desires, at one and the same time.’

“ But tell me, Sir,” reply’d our virtuoso in music, “ are not you a philosopher, or don’t you at least study philosophy; are you in consequence of it content and quiet in your mind? You hardly persuade me of that. I see you in continual motion; you do not enjoy so much as a moment’s ease. You eat sometimes, without knowing it; you are eating; and speak too, not seldom in a very same way. Your head is so full of chimneys, that you can hardly tell when ’tis day and when ’tis night. T’other day you took into your head to throw yourself into a reservoir; and if I go

* Quic
cero de

Vol.

for nothing man of song, had not catchēd hold of your coat, your philosophy had been in great hazard of being drown'd. Do you think to persuade me, that a science which transports people so, as not to see a great collection of water at the foot of a gravel-walk, communicates any kind of wisdom? for my part, to tell you the truth, I cannot help thinking that you philosophers are very comical sort of people. They are reading, forsooth, what is written in the Heavens, without knowing what passes under their feet*. You have a mighty contempt for musick, Sir; but I defy you to prove that it is half so mischievous, as that sort of fanaticism, which you call philosophy. If it ravishes the senses, it is in so soft, so sweet a manner, that we fall into a kind of ecstactic repose. "Do but observe a man coming out of an opera house, you see him beating time with his feet as it were for half an hour. If he is young and light-timber'd, he cuts a few capers, and presently falls a finging a favourite air. He comes up to a woman with a gallant air, like that of Acis when he salutes Galatea; all is easy, all is pleasant, like the place from whence he comes. On the other hand, observe a young fellow at the university, as he is coming from the publick schools, his eyes how wild! his air how fierce! his head full of logick, and a syllogism between his teeth. One disputation just finished, he meditates another; and is considering in his mind what new arguments may be made use of for demolishing his adversary. He is everlastingly out of humour; and all his knowledge, all his philosophy serves only to torment him. Tell me, dear Sir, which is most useful to society, that kind of study which vexes people, puts them as it were out of their senses; and under pretence of rendering them wise, does in fact make

* Quod est ante pedes nemo spectat; Cœli scriptantur plagas.
Cicero de Divinat. lib. ii.

" them fools ; or that which amuses them agreeably
" removes all chagrin, and leaves the soul in perfect
" tranquility. This, dear Sir, is the specifick dif-
" ference between musick and philosophy. You may
" say what you please, but I shall never alter my
" opinion."

" Mighty well ! reply'd the metaphysician, with an
air of contempt ; I would advise you to pass all your
life in singing, you will be then upon the level with
the nightingales. As for me, I apprehend God has
given me a faculty of thinking, and I am oblig'd to
make use of it. I do not pretend to restrain you from
exercising the talents, bestowed upon you by nature;
but I expect that you should likewise allow me to
make use of such as have fallen to my share."

" You call that thinking, reply'd our advocate for
" harmony, which is no better than following wild
" and extravagant ideas, which are the effects of a
" disorder'd imagination ; for my part, I look upon
" thinking in quite another light. I apprehend it to
" be such an use of reason as enables me to pass easily
" through life, and administers to all those wants
" which in the course thereof I am sure to feel. I
" believe 'tis better to leave searching into things
" beyond our understanding, and to apply ourselves
" to that sort of knowledge which is useful and
" necessary. As for example, contriving how to
" live commodiously and happily, to eat, drink,
" sleep, laugh, sing, and pass pleasantly the days
" which Heaven bestows upon us, instead of bestow-
" ing them in useless meditations. Tell me, dear
" Sir, what sort of illness your way of thinking will
" cure ? can a man, by studying the metaphysics,
" ease himself of a megrim. So far from it, that it
" will make him ten times worse ; and he had better
" by half have heard an overture of the opera, or
" any other agreeable piece of musick, which might
" have charm'd his mind, and render'd him insensible
" of his pain. When a man is attacked by the va-
" pours, what good will philosophy do him ? turn him
" perhaps

" perhaps quite mad, by increasing his melancholy.
" But on the other hand, if he hears a violin, his ill
" humour goes off, his spirits begin to revive, and
" he is as cheerful as ever. There cannot be a stron-
" ger demonstration of the power of musick, than
" what is seen every day in Italy, in the case of a
" person bit by a tarantula. Go, harangue the sick
" person about the schemes of your Gassendi, Descar-
" tes, and all your men of science, it will signify
" just nothing ; they will certainly die, in spite of
" all your eloquence. Let but a fiddle enter, up
" jumps the patient, leaps, skips, capers, and de-
" rives from musick that remedy which restores
" him to his health and senses. After he has foot-
" ed it an hour or two, weary and quite worn out,
" he falls fast asleep ; and when he awakes, finds
" himself perfectly well. All the philosophy in the
" world can do nothing like this : Can it ?"

I don't know, Isaac, whether the conversations of my fellow-travellers, will appear diverting to you ; but I assure you, they prove so to me, and I pass my moments very agreeably in hearing their altercations.

May'st thou enjoy thy health, live content and happy, and may the God of our fathers continue to cover thee with blessings.

LETTER CXXXII.

The horrid consequences arising from the principle of persecution, on account of differing in opinion as to matters of religion.—The unreasonableness as well as wickedness of such a damnable doctrine, proved.—A short piece of history relating to king James, and William the III. of England.—Religious wars very destructive in a state.—Freedom and toleration of all religions, recommended.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Lisbon.—

THE dissentions, my dear Moncea, to which our brethren stand exposed in this country, have led me to make my reflections on the reciprocal mischiefs the Nazarenes do each other in consequence of that horrid maxim, that it is not only lawful, but even necessary to exterminate hereticks. The consequences flowing from this cruel principle are fatal alike to men of all beliefs, notwithstanding those who maintain them do not advert to its necessary consequence, that exposes themselves to all the evils they inflict on their adversaries. If once they reflect on the inconveniences which a persecuting principle draws after it, they would publickly change their sentiments.

People that are hereticks in one country, are orthodox in another; as those that are orthodox in one place, are hereticks in another. This truth will appear plainly, if we consider ever so slightly the prevailing religions throughout Europe. A protestant is an heretick at Paris, but is one of the elect at London. A papist is an idolater in England; whereas in France, it is held there is no passage to Heaven, but by the popish road. See then, how nations who believe oppositely, agree in believing

this,

this, that all are hereticks who are not of their religion; that is, of their established religion. If we should suppose the principles of the inquisition spread throughout all nations, what horrors! what bloodshed would they bring upon the World! In Portugal, in Spain, in France, in Italy, in Austria, Bohemia and Poland, they would cut the throats, burn, break on the wheel, or massacre without distinction, Lutherans, Calvinists, Church-of-England men, &c. In Holland, Great-Britain, Denmark and Prussia, they would hang and draw papists, if some divines had their way, and the magistrate had no more humanity than the clergy. In Muscovy they would tyrannize over and condemn to death both catholicks and protestants, as equally hereticks in disbelieving the Russian faith. In Turkey again, the same Muscovites would fall a sacrifice to the glory of Mohammed; and in Persia, to the honour of Ali.

Observe, dear Moncea, the horrors, crimes and impieties, which follow incontestably from this maxim, that we ought to persecute hereticks, and oblige them to change their sentiments by punishments and tortures. If such as pretend to be animated by a true zeal for the glory of God, were really influenced by any such spirit, they would be far from endeavouring thus to convince the mind, or from thinking it a right way to remove prejudice from the heart, to have recourse to such violences as are contrary to the law of nature and the idea which reason gives men of the Deity. They would perceive, that in persecuting their adversaries they expose their brethren to the same mischiefs wherever they were scattered in other places. But inasmuch as they are guided by their passion, or rather by their fury, provided they do but accomplish their designs in the places where they are masters, they never think of what may happen any where else, in consequence of what they do at home.

The Roman-catholicks, or rather the court of Rome, the ecclesiastics and the monks employed

all sorts of methods, in order to drive the protestants out of France. After a good deal of murder and bloodshed, they brought their project to bear. But what followed; why, the popish religion itself received very shortly the greatest check it ever sustained. England totally barred popery from returning thither; it cost an unhappy king three kingdoms; or rather it cost a weak prince such a sacrifice for confiding in priests; and the protestants they had banished served for a pretence to exile an infinite number of papists, and seizing their effects.

While at Paris, they destroyed without mercy whatever wore the appearance of protestantism; the prince of Orange wisely made use of the handle their madness furnished. To say the truth, his affairs would have suffered if those of the reformed religion had been more mildly treated. To the persecutions raised by the French clergy, and to the clergy in another country, that prince stood indebted for the crown of Great-Britain. If the Jesuits, from their itch to governing, had not put king James on so many extravagancies, William the III^d would have found no occasion of going over to England, in order to maintain the rights and liberties of an oppressed nation. All historians agree that king James pushed his attachment and submission to the Jesuits much too far. Madam de la Fayette, tho' a zealous catholick, acknowledges nevertheless in her memoirs of the court of France during the years 1688 and 1689, that when they came in that country thoroughly to know the character of this prince, they retained for him only a sort of pity bordering on contempt. The archbishop of Rheims, Maurice le Tellier, as we are informed by that lady, could not help saying, in a sneering way, "Look upon that good man, he quitted three kingdoms for one mafs". It was also thought a mark of his bad taste, that he was continually beset with Jesuits, and that he affected to say that he was of their order*. The continuators of Rapin's

* P. 120, 124, 155.

history

history of England, tho' they are declared enemies to the protestant religion, have made no difficulty of inserting this singular story, and of adding to it the following reflection ; " They, that is, the people of France, went so far, as to impute secretly his misfortunes to him, as if they were crimes, on account of his having engaged France in a tedious and ruinous war, of which they foresaw the effects †".

It was not, however, king James, dear Moncea, to whom the French ought to have attributed the troubles and difficulties that were brought upon them by the maintaining his cause. It was to them who gave him those pernicious counsels, and plunged him into that abyſs from whence he never got out ; it was to them that they should have attributed those evils, and on them they should have devolved their spleen. The misfortunes of that prince were the effects of the ambition of the jesuits, and of their pernicious maxim, that all means are to be employed for destroying hereticks. The English had before their eyes the example of the French, protestants ; and they were afraid with good reason, that they should one day find it their own case. " If the king, said they, begins to diminish our privileges, and to extend those of our adversaries, we shall by little and little be reduced into a situation which will incapacitate us from resisting the designs of the court of Rome. At present they make use of fraud, by and by they may make use of open force. The French protestants set Henry the IVth upon the throne ; so long as he lived, they were not oppressed, but a little after his death they began to trick them, and then to persecute them ; at last they banished them, and taught them to experience the effects of that abominable maxim, that to make use of all methods to extirpate hereticks, is allowed by divine and human laws. Let us then prevent the storm which

† Continuation de Rapin Thoyras, tom. xi. p. 41.

" threatens

" threatens us; let us strangle the serpent we have
" nourished in our bosom, and give a mortal
" wound to popery, by dethroning a king who
" protects it, and would establish it on the ruins
" of our liberty, and our religion. If there is
" any thing base in this action, our enemies have
" no right to reproach us; if we rebel, we rebel
" against a popish prince, and they set us the ex-
" ample in refusing to acknowledge a protestant
" one. Did they not publish a million of writings,
" to prove that a people were not bound to submit
" to a heretick prince, their preachers employed
" all their talents for publishing this doctrine in
" the midst of Paris. At present we find it neces-
" sary to adopt their maxim; we do no more than
" dethrone a king attainted and convicted of popery,
" which, with reason, we look upon as of all others
" the most dangerous heresy".

Observe, my dear Moncea, in the remarks made by the English, what fatal effects the doctrine of reprisals in religious wars will inevitably have. Consider, at the same time, the mischief which the ungoverned rage of different sects hath brought upon whole nations. For after all, notwithstanding the risques the protestants in England might run, I can by no means approve of their conduct. I am thoroughly persuaded, that it is not lawful for subjects, on any pretence whatsoever, to take up arms against their prince; and I have often, with great pleasure, heard you maintain the same thing with much vivacity. However, when once we admit, that men are at liberty to break their faith to hereticks, and to compel them by force to alter their opinions, we open a wide gap to all sorts of disorders; we shake the thrones of kings, and breathe into the people among whom we inhabit, a spirit of treason and rebellion.

If it were once thoroughly established throughout Europe, that rebellion has nothing to do with government, how happy would the people be, and how

how much more at ease their kings, than now they are? What is it to them, if some of their subjects sing in French, in English, in Dutch, or in German, while others believe the psalms are profaned in any other language but Latin? If for this purpose they assemble on Saturday or on Sunday, pay their taxes, and discharge all the duties they owe to society? But, say the politicians, when there are many religions in a country, it is impossible but they should produce civil wars. This I admit, if any one of these religions maintains that pernicious maxim, that it is lawful to employ all methods for subverting and destroying others; and that sometimes all the other sects will unite together, in order to demolish that which would otherwise tyrannize. But in a well-governed state, where the people in general are persuaded that every man ought to be allowed to think freely, and to serve God as he sees proper, all the world will enjoy peace and quiet, tho' there should be fifty different religions in the dominion of that state. In order to be convinced of the truth of this proposition, we need only enquire into the present situation of England and Holland. How many different sects are there in those countries? Yet they give each other no manner of trouble. Jews, Anti-Trinitarians, Quakers, Anabaptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Independents, Muggletonians, dispute sometimes with each other, but they never think of cutting throats; and if sometimes there happens any troubles on account of religious controversies in England, all the different sects treat it as a popish spirit, and immediately enter into a league offensive and defensive, in order to cover themselves from its effects. In a word, they seem to be all equally afraid of this pernicious principle, that it is just and reasonable thing to persecute heretics for their own good. To this point a certain author testifies, who both had an opportunity of knowing, and was well acquainted with the terror all religions in England have of popery. "If one,

" says

" says he, should ask me to what degree different
 " sects are to be tolerated? I answer, that they
 " ought all to stand on equal terms; that they
 " should at all times and in all places, be at liberty
 " to justify their faith, by disputing, by preaching
 " in their assemblies, and by publishing books.
 " But popery ought to be entirely deprived even
 " of the benefit of toleration, not as a religion,
 " but as a tyrannical faction, ready to oppres-
 " others, and so far from being content with an
 " equality, that it is always striving for domini-
 " on, and not only so, but seeks also the utter de-
 " struction of such as oppose it *."

To this passage from the Virgil of England, permit me to add another from an illustrious defender of toleration, too much addicted to philosophy to fall into any prejudices on the score of religion. "Never fear, says he, that the missionaries should "quarrel among themselves, when the great busi- "ness of dragooning is on foot. The Thomists, "and the Scotists, the Molinists and the Jansenists, "forget their differences, banish their disputes, "and labour one and all in the execution of that "catholick precept, Compel them to come in †."

One thing, Moncea, surprizes me, the popular Nazarenes are by no means ignorant of the mischiefs produced by their violent conduct on their brethren in other places. They know very well what reproaches those brethren of theirs suffer on account of these persecutions, and of their lust of power; and yet, instead of behaving more mildly, they act with greater rancour than ever, as if they intended to perpetuate persecutions, instead of putting an end to them. On the other hand, their antagonists, possessed with the same unaccountable spight, torment innocent persons, who have nothing to do with the cruelties committed by their

* Milton's Miscellaneous works.

† Bayle, Dictionnaire Historique & Critique, tom. iii. p. 339.

gethren. What connection is there between an English papist and an Italian Jesuit? Or why should one be punished for the faults of the other. It is absolutely popish to persecute an honest Roman-catholick in Ireland, as it is to banish a protestant of France. Ought there to be reprizals in matters of religion? What matter of triumph! What subject for reflection, Monceca! doth the unequitable conduct of the Nazarene sects afford to an honest Jew?

Fare thee well, Monceca, live content and happy.

LETTER CXXXIII.

short sketch of the general character of the English.—Their virtues and vices impartially considered.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

London.—

T is not, dear Isaac, above four or five days since I came to London. It is therefore impossible for me to give you any just idea of the character of the English. It is true, I have taken notice of many things which strike me, and which are certainly worthy the attention of a traveller; but as yet I have not had leisure to look into them sufficiently. There is one thing which renders it very difficult to characterise the English. It is this: they have a great many virtues, which seem directly opposite to vices with which they are however tainted. The contrarieties which one is sure discern in examining the manners and the mode of thinking among these people, appear so extraordinary, that it requires a very serious examination before one can pretend to assign their good or qualities.

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In order to give a true and just notion of this nation, it is absolutely necessary to divest one's self of all prejudices, to forget that one is a Frenchman, a German, or Italian, and to form all our sentiments of men by rules furnished by the light of reason. My opinion is, that a judge thus qualified, will find in the English many great and shining qualities, tho' shaded by not a few follies and vices. But as there is no nation possessed of worth unabated by some disadvantageous qualities, so if the virtues of the English are found to be far more considerable than their faults, we cannot, with any show of justice, decry them as a people, or expect that while they are men, they should not participate of the frailties to which human nature is liable.

I see, since I have been here, that the inhabitants of this country in general are large, well made, agile, robust people. I perceive likewise, that their exterior form is in some measure a picture of their inward frame of mind. Many intelligent people have assured me, that the vigour and activity of an English genius, is not inferior to the strength and nimbleness of an Englishman's body. Of this I shall endeavour to give you proofs in my subsequent letters, and promise you to communicate whatever discoveries I make here, with a sincerity becoming a philosopher, to whom mankind seem to be but one great nation.

On my arrival in London, I could not but take notice of that plenty, magnificence and contempt of little things, for which the English, as a people are distinguished when spoken of in other nations. I likewise observed that fierceness which strangers are so apt to call insolence; and from the best enquiry I have been able to make into it, I can by no means think it merits so harsh an appellation.

If one were to judge of the English by what is said of them by other nations, and regulate one's opinion by theirs, one must fall into very gross errors. Most of the relations written by travellers are strongly seasoned with that prejudice against

England

England, which however ill founded, is spread but too generally throughout Europe. It is true indeed, that the English have given some cause for this, by their common manner of preferring themselves to all the rest of mankind; an indecency ever attended with ill consequences.

This fault, however, is not peculiar to them; it is common, in some degree or other, to all nations. To speak freely, the English push it too far, and with too little reserve. As they are rich and powerful, they think, and sure it is a great fault, that they are not bound to keep measures with other people. But notwithstanding this, all the tales which are daily told of their brutality and want of manners, deserve rather pity than correction; and one should rather despise than attempt to confute them. I must allow that the English are not very desirous of being acquainted with strangers; and when they are acquainted with them, give them every now and then to understand that they are their betters in every respect; and I do admit that this humour is ridiculous. Far be it from me to excuse such an unhappy oddity of temper, so contrary to the rules of good manners, and even to those of reason. But still there is a good deal of difference between insolence and a good opinion of one's self. Where is there a creature more opinionated and self-conceited than a French petit-maitre; and yet who is more civil, more complaisant, or more polite than he? To say the truth, the English, to their good opinion of themselves, add the vanity also of giving others to understand as much, and it is this that renders their conduct so disgusting.

A stranger in this country cannot walk the streets without hearing the people enter into a description of him, and blaming whatever he has about his person differing from themselves. This puts a traveller unavoidably out of humour, he cannot with patience hear his countrymen injured through his sides, and himself tacitly censured as well as the rest. When therefore he comes home, he remembers nothing of

The good qualities of the English, their faults only remain fresh in his memory, and he paints them in such colours as spleen and vengeance furnish him with.

I have done my utmost, Isaac, to discover the true sources of the pride and haughtiness of the English, their contempt of other nations, and particularly of the French; and I imagine, that without much difficulty, I am come at the true cause. The refugees, by their own conduct, have inspired these people with a contemptible idea of their former condition, and by reflection, with high notions of their own. They who are opulent themselves, and live in the midst of riches and abundance, regard with an eye of pity, men struggling with want; and yet such as in this country are not blessed with the goods of fortune, do not try all methods, and endeavour at any rate to better their condition. On the contrary, satisfied with a little, while they enjoy it with liberty, they live quietly and chearfully. We see few Englishmen going to seek their fortunes; they blush at the thoughts of getting money in the way of some other adventurers. Their commerce is their sole resource; a way equally reputable to themselves, and useful to their country. It is not therefore at all strange, that men who think in this respect so philosophically, should despise people whom they see running all the world over in quest of money, endeavouring to acquire it by all sorts of means, even by such as with them pass for shameful and scandalous methods.

One may venture to affirm, that such of the English as are well to pass, are fierce and haughty in right of their fortunes, and that such as are in a meaner condition, are vain and proud, because they know how to be satisfied with their condition.

The great number of knights of the industry which swarm in the city of London, contributes not a little to the giving the English an ill opinion of the foreigners in general, and of the French in particular. Such as have never travelled, form their ideas

of strangers, according to the conduct of those whom they have seen, judging rashly of the whole piece by the worst part of its felvige.

This, without doubt, is the cause of the contempt these people have for the inhabitants of every other country but their own. To this contempt they join an undisguised hatred with respect to the French. On this head the men of quality and the vulgar have but one way of thinking; indeed it seems to be the topick on which, of all others, they are best agreed. There are several reasons which may be offered for this extraordinary prejudice; the wars subsisting as it were continually between the two nations, their particular interests which almost constantly thwart each other; and to sum up all, religion, which carries all things to extremities whenever it interferes with national disputes.

If the differences which have so long reigned between France and England, were of the same nature with those between the Germans and the French, the conclusion of the war would also put an end to the animosity between the nations. When people fight for the glory and interests of their sovereigns, as soon as they have received satisfaction, the thing is at an end; no body thinks of what is past, tho' it frequently happens that whole provinces have changed their masters; the inhabitants are neither the better nor the worse for it; they lose not either their estates or their privileges, but enjoy, under their new sovereigns, all that they possessed under their old. But when there is a war between France and England, it is far from being the sole concern of sovereigns. Every private man has his share; and as many merchants as there are in each respective country, so many enemies there are. A French ship taken by the English is a complicated act, whereby all the owners of that ship and cargo are injured in their tenderest concern. Every burges of St. Malo's, every trader of Dunkirk, becomes the sworn enemy of the merchants of London; and on the other hand, every captain of a French privateer is a petty sovereign,

reign, and fights in his own quarrel against the English nation.

The wars between the Empire and France are between crown'd heads ; the wars between the French and the English are between particular people, and the ancient hatred on each side is strengthened by every new difference ; this is much the stronger on account of difference in religion, which of all other causes most keeps up national antipathies.

All men abhor such as would put any restraint upon their consciences ; but even this abhorrence grows stronger, when such as are neither our masters, our friends, or our countrymen, pretend to meddle with our religion. The retreat of the late king James II. into France ; the succours given him there ; the many attempts made in his favour, have provoked the English more than a war of twenty years duration.

Another thing, which has swell'd the pride and vanity of that nation, is the needy and miserable, and of consequence, the mean and submissive state of a multitude of French people, who have fled thither from time to time on account of their religion. I do admit, that folks who have lost their estates, who are banish'd their country, and have no means of escaping want but from the bounty of the English, are excusable in paying them greater complaisance than it would be right in other circumstances to do. But still there are some bounds to be kept even in this case, and they ought not to stoop to those outrageous flatteries which of all things depreciate them most in the opinion of those whom they flatter.

The English, who followed the fortunes of king James, ought to have been patterns to the French refugees. They were banish'd, as well as they, they had exactly the same grounds for complaint ; and yet distinguishing their country from those particular persons who were at the helm, and were the immediate instruments and favourites of king William, they were as true Britons at St. Germains as at London.

How is it possible that people who sincerely love their country, who have a passion deeply engraven for it in their hearts, who are capable of maintaining this spirit, and this true greatness of soul, in a strange country, and under a load of misfortunes? How is it possible, I say, that so gallant a people should do otherwise than despise an abject race of men, continually decrying the land of their nativity, blaming what before they applauded, and blindly approving what they heretofore condemned. It is certain, my friend, that this conduct in the French hath in part drawn the contempt of the English upon them. They would have found the same relief if they had kept up their spirits under their misfortunes; and if they had shewn a resolution not to sacrifice that love they ought to have had for their country, for the sake of a precarious subsistence, I am confident the English would have esteemed them much more than they do.

Farewell, dear Isaac, and let me often hear from thee.

LETTER CXXXIV.

A farther description of the dispositions and manners of the English nation.—Trade thought no scandal.—Their merchants in general men of honour.—Noblemen respected only for their virtues, not on account of birth and honours.—Great contradictions in the temper and behaviour of the English.—They are charg'd with inconstancy.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

London—

I begin, dear Isaac, to know the English nation well enough to enter on a distinct account of them. At present I shall not offer any thing to your view relating to their nobility, which when I do, I must distinguish into various classes, but content myself

self with endeavouring to give you a clear notion of the rest of the nation.

The English are not such fools to think trade a scandal: Amongst them a man of business makes a very considerable figure, and with reason; for while he endeavours to enrich himself, he at the same time contributes towards the enriching of his country. Almost all the merchants in this country are the sons of knights, or at least of principal gentlemen; nay, there have been sometimes lords, who have thought it no discredit to them that their brethren and their children were bred up to trade.

The idea which the English have of merchants, renders people of that denomination quite another sort of men than they are elsewhere. As there is nothing in their profession which either damps their spirits, or debases their reputation, they think in quite another way than French, German, Flemish, or Italian merchants do. They have as quick notions of honour as of interest, and are no less concerned for their country's being enriched, than for the increase of their private fortunes. This is one of the great causes of the bright figure which trade makes in London.

There is another thing peculiar to the traders in this country; it is the wise and prudent use they make of the riches they acquire. When an Englishman hath raised an estate in trade, he leaves it off and becomes a country gentleman. They are indefatigable for some years in business, and then they wisely and contentedly sit down and enjoy the fruit of their labours. It seems as if this nation alone had preserved a just sense of that equality which nature meant to establish among men. It is not only the traders do not suffer themselves to be imposed upon by the swelling sounds of empty titles, but the very people behave with proper moderation in this respect, and in their addresses to the great, shew nothing of that fear and flattery admiration which is so common in all other countries.

A lord here is only respected in proportion to the good he does. If he is a good-natur'd, easy, affable and generous person, he is generally esteemed, and meets with all the marks of respect he can desire; which are so much the more pleasing, because he well knows he would not receive them, if they were not due to his merit. If on the other hand, he has no good qualities in him, he is looked upon with indifference, and treated as a useless member of society. He enjoys, it is true, the privileges due to his rank, and leads just such a life at London, as a discarded courtier at Versailles. I must tell you farther, my friend, that an English nobleman appears to be more mortified on losing the regards of his countrymen, than a Frenchman seems to be when in disgrace with his prince. You will the more readily apprehend this, when I tell you, that a strong passion for glory, and for the honour of his country, is predominant in every English soul.

It is not only in this sort of conduct towards the great, that the meaner sort of people resemble the more substantial. It is the same thing with regard to most of the good and bad qualities they possess: for the English in general being a thinking people, reason and common sense supply even in the meanest of them, any defects in their education. The manner in which the people are dressed, is a demonstration of the ease in which they live. One sees here an air of abundance, among even the lowest people; and it is this extraordinary plenty which makes the mob insolent, and gives that air of fierceness complained of even in those of superior rank. Self-conceit is the natural defect of the inhabitants of this country. Whatever situation of life they are in, they set a high value upon themselves; for let them live how they will, they are still Englishmen, and on this they ground a kind of indelible title to respect.

I told you in my first letter, that the virtues and vices of this nation, are equally great, and that one sees in their characters astonishing contradictions: I will now support this observation by instances. The English have

have a great and noble spirit; they detest treachery; this generosity of theirs will not allow them to see combatants on unequal terms. If a man in the streets of London should pretend to cane another who had no stick in his hand, he would be mobb'd. But if a person were indiscreet enough to draw upon a naked man, the prentice boys and journeymen in the neighbourhood, would be tempted either to pull him to pieces, or throw him into the Thames. Such are the effects of this their generous impetuosity, which seems excusable on account of the rectitude of their intentions. But these very people, who can't endure to see men engaged on unequal terms, resemble the ancient Romans in their liking to gladiators. Is there not something savage in beholding such bloody spectacles? when they can't see men fight, they divert themselves at the expence of cocks, dogs and bulls. This ferocity of theirs must be satisfied, and for want of their own species, they are content to sacrifice animals to their humours.

Who can imagine, that a people so cruel and bloody in their diversions, are notwithstanding humane and charitable in the highest degree? there are, however, very few among the English, who, if their circumstances allow it, refuse an alms to the poor. Nay, they carry the thing further still; they do not stay till they are ask'd, the sight of indigence is sufficient to move them, and from a motive of humanity they give, that they may be easy in themselves.

One of the most singular differences in the temper of these people is their contempt of trifles, and their excessive love of what they call the fashion. One cannot but be amazed to see in the same people sentiments and inclinations so entirely opposite. To this oddity I cannot help joining another, which is perhaps as singular, viz. their propensity to chancery. When one considers the multitude of law-suits which are daily decided in London, and when one reflects on the prudence and good sense which one every where discovers in the books and discourses of the English, one is tempted to think, that they talk like philosophers,

think

think like pettifoggers, and act like the Normans, from whom, in a great measure, their best families are descended. This is certain, that false witnesses are as plenty here as in Normandy. Nay, one would imagine that they had some respect for them, and were afraid of destroying the breed; they punish them so lightly in comparison of what they deserve, that a knight of the post in London is infinitely a safer employment than a Jansenist book-seller in Paris.

As to religion, every Englishman has one of his own cut. If there was a proclamation to bring in their creeds, I do verily believe there would not be two alike. But notwithstanding these variations in point of belief, they are incredibly zealous for the particular sects under the denomination of which they range themselves. A Churchman hates a Presbyterian as heartily as a Jansenist does a Jesuit. The Presbyterian pays the Churchman in his own coin, but they unite in detesting a Papist, who has in his turn a cordial abhorrence for them both *.

How does so whimsical a behaviour as this agree with the good sense of the English, and with that toleration in matters of religion which subsists among them? One is forced, when one speaks freely, to confess that there are a kind of follies which may be styled national, and that a people ought to be esteemed wise and happy whose weaknesses are few and favourable. On this principle, dear Isaac, I cannot help saying, that the English are very much indebted to nature. For amongst the different follies with which all nations are infected, the English have for their share the lightest, and the least dangerous to good sense. With these small faults, they have great and shining virtues. We observe among them a constancy which elie-

* Inde furor vulgi quod numina vicinorum
Odit quisque locus; cum solos credit habendas.
Effe Deos, quos ipse colit. Juv. Sat. xv.

where

where passes for philosophick. They have the courage to declare against old opinions whenever they discover them to be erroneous; it signifies nothing to tell them that their fathers thought so and so, and that they ought to revere the antiquity of any opinions. This, I say, signifies nothing to them; for no sooner is the delusion manifest than they assert their right of discarding it. It is a common thing to hear an Englishman say, we have play'd the fool as to such or such a thing these two or three hundred years, it is high time that we should become wiser and not put it into the power of our children to make the same complaints, and with the same justice, against us, that we do against our forefathers.

It is certainly, dear Isaac, a pleasing thing to discern in a whole nation a disposition to make use of their reason; and this appears the more extraordinary, when we consider that most other nations condemn and persecute such as have the courage to act in this manner.

Another essential quality in the English is their neglect of nicety; or as they call it finicalness. A petit-maitre at London is not more the jest of men of sense than of the meanest people. He is regarded by both as a sort of marmot, or any other pretty dancing animal that's shewn at fairs. You cannot imagine, my friend, how much I admire this sagacity. For surely, if custom did not blunt the understandings of other nations, they would see these triflers in the same light, and be as well pleased with their tricks and grimaces, as with a monkey's dancing on the rope.

The English are commonly charged with inconstancy and fickleness. To say the truth, their history is a clear and distinct proof of the inequality of their behaviour towards their princes. In order to excuse this, they pretend that they have never been wanting in their duty with respect to their sovereigns, but when they were forced to it in order to preserve their rights. If this assertion

of theirs was founded in truth, one might believe that the love of liberty was the cause of their revolutions. But notwithstanding all they say in extenuation of their conduct, it is easy enough to see that this liberty, of which they talk so much, serves sometimes only for a pretence to cover their lightness and love of change. Ambitious men amongst them know how to work on the credulity of the people, and by filling their minds with false fears upon this subject, conduct the motions of popular fury in such a manner as to lift themselves into the best places.

To be convinced of the truth of this, one needs only consider the revolutions amongst them, as they themselves represent them. We shall see that they have happened under princes of characters directly opposite; whence it is plain, that the conduct of their princes was not the true cause. The English were equally displeased with the soft and indolent behaviour of Henry VI. and with the bold and enterprizing temper of Edward IV. deposing both these princes in their turns; and by an effect of the same inconstancy unknown to every other nation, they were alike displeased with the gallantry and love of pleasure which distinguish'd Charles II. and the capacity and activity which all the world allowed to William III. They caball'd and plotted against both with the same obstinacy, tho' they had set each of them upon the throne with all possible marks of joy and general satisfaction.

These troubles under kings so different in their maxims of government, shews plainly that the fault lies in the English nation; and that which still more clearly proves, that the rights and liberties of the nation are not always in question, is, that revolutions have happened under kings, who, instead of encroaching upon or violating, have actually conserved and enlarged their rights by voluntary concessions. Let us, however, my friend, acknowledge, that tho' English sovereigns have not always

always been in fault, yet have they not on the other hand been always free from blame.

Farewell, dear Isaac, live content and happy.

LETTER CXXXV.

The limited power of the kings of England, treated of.—An Englishman's opinion concerning the power of kings.—Several quotations from Grotius on the same subject.—And one from Titus Livy.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Hamburg.—

THE English, dear Isaac, allow their kings such a kind of power as certain philosophers attribute to the Deity. The sovereign, in this country, may do as much good as he will, but as for harm, that lies pretty much out of his reach: He may, if he pleases, spare an offender's life, but he cannot take away the life of no man. It is the law, and the legal judges only, who have the power of punishing in this country, where arbitrary authority can do nothing. The most considerable employments, however, are in the king, that is to say, are in his gift. He nominates bishops, and other dignify'd clergy. He cannot, however, remove people from their offices; that must be done in a legal way. While men in place are honest, act up to their duty, and are, strictly speaking, the servants of their country, they have nothing to fear, either from the inconstancy or evil disposition of their princes, who have an absolute power over none but their domestic servants.

The king and the state have their separate rights. It is an establish'd maxim in England, and openly defended by the best lawyers, that the king has two superiors, God and the Law, to whom

he owes the same respect with the meanest of his subjects *.

" Is it not true, said an Englishman, a friend of mine, to me one day, that the people were not created to be the slaves of princes, and to afford them the cruel pleasure of tormenting? He must be a fool who should dare to say, that God created one man to make others miserable. Since then kings are appointed not for the destruction, but for the preservation of their people, not to do them evil, but to be their benefactors, it follows, that like other men, they must be obedient to the laws made for the common good of the society. If indeed, we could be always sure of having virtuous and wise kings, there would be no need of circumscribing them within any bounds, their probity and rectitude of heart would sufficiently limit them, and answer effectually the intention of these sort of restrictions. But the throne is too often filled with persons who stand in the utmost need of laws to controul their wills. How happy had it been for the Romans, if in time they had check'd the cruelties of Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero, and obliged them to quit their title to sovereignty, when they took up the scandalous trade of tyrants?

" Our kings, continued my friend, enter into a contract with us; while they observe the conditions of it, they have all imaginable respect paid them, they enjoy their prerogatives in the most ample manner, and are as absolute in doing good to their people as they can wish. It is true, if they forget their promises, they run the hazard of exciting some very dangerous sedition. But to avoid this, there is no more requisite than that they should keep their words, and remember, that at their coronation they swore to observe the laws and to see them observed. Why should the people be more bound by their promises than their sovereigns; a king who becomes a tyrant sets his subjects a bad

* Rex in Regno suo superiores habet, Deum & Legem.

example, and teaches them by his own conduct to make light of the most sacred and solemn agreements. But it may be said, that our lives and fortunes depend upon our princes, true, and we ought to sacrifice both in their quarrels, if they are wise and just. Inasmuch as they are the fathers of their subjects, we ought to behave towards them with filial piety. But such a submission can only be expected while that reciprocal relation subsists whence it naturally arises.

" If kings are above the laws, and if they may dispense with them when they think fit, to what purpose do they promise that they will observe certain rules? All that they do upon this head, and all the assurances that they give are only mummeries. When a prince is crown'd, and there solemnly swears to observe certain rules, we ought, it seems, to look upon this swearing as a mere necessary form in the ceremony, not to be omitted for the sake of decency, tho' in fact it is useless, and serves only to shew that there were freemen in times past, but that all who live now are slaves. There is no body quite so mad as positively to assert this; the most zealous defenders of arbitrary power acknowledge, that a sovereign ought to keep his promises, and yet absurdly, and beyond all comprehension, they conclude that they may violate them with impunity."

I must confess, my dear Isaac, that what this Englishman said to me seemed very plausible. In effect, it appears reasonable, that if we assert, kings are bound by their promises, we should also admit, that it is lawful to disobey them when they break their words; for it seems to be a necessary consequence of the mutual engagements between sovereigns and their people, that they should no longer subsist when those conditions are wanting, for the sake of which it was agreed, that this distinction of sovereign and subject should take place. Now it cannot be denied that such as have writ-

ten with the greatest warmth against sedition, have positively asserted that princes could not violate their contracts with their people, without being guilty of injustice. "It must be allowed, says the famous Grotius*, that when princes under-
take to govern by certain rules, their sovereignty is in some degree limited and restrained; whether those obligations regard barely the exercise of their power, or directly, and in the first instance, affect the power in their hands. In the first case, whatever they do contrary to their promise being an act of injustice, every promise vesting a right in those to whom the promise is made. In the other case, the act is unjust and void at the same time, for want of a legal power to support it."

Behold, my dear Isaac, a precise decision by an author whose character is above suspicion. But he explains himself still more clearly in another place, wherein he seems to have forgot his own system. "Now, if it be demanded, says he, what will happen if this clause be added to the contract, that in case the king breaks his word, he shall forfeit his title to the crown? I answer, that even in this case the power of the king does not cease to be absolute, but that he holds his power as it were for a time†".

It seems to me, Isaac, that our author could not well say more against arbitrary power, and the violating subjects rights with impunity. Grotius, however passes for an author directly opposite in sentiments to the Anti-Royalists. And tho' it may be said in his favour, that there is no contract between sovereigns and subjects, wherein it is expressly stipulated, that the forfeiture of their crowns shall attend the breaking of their words, yet it is too feeble to destroy what he before advanced. For tho' in these engagements between subjects

* Hugo Grotius, de Jure Belli & Pacis, tom. i. p. 121.

† Grotius de Jure Belli & Pacis, p. 125.

and kings it be not declared, that by the violation of the contract the prince shall lose his rights, such a clause is nevertheless tacitly comprehended in them, because this contract cannot be relied on, if the people did not reserve to themselves such a power to enforce it. Without this, such engagements would be fruitless; for tho' they might serve to bind subjects to their prince, yet it must be to such a prince as could not bind himself in return. With respect to all such conditions, they must either be real and effectual, or vain and useless. But the universal opinion is, that they are real, and that both parties are bound to observe them. Well then, both parties must reserve a right of forcing the observation, and therefore, tho' it be not specified in the engagements, that princes when they break them lose their authority, yet this clause seems necessary to the validity and the security of the contract.

These reasons, dear Isaac, seem very strong against such as maintain that it is not lawful to take arms against our prince. I must own to you, however, that I am thoroughly persuaded the people have no right to dethrone their sovereigns; I go still farther, for I am of opinion, that if they had such a power, the abuse of it would bring upon them the greatest miseries.

When we compare the compacts between sovereigns and their subjects to those between private men, we run into a very great error. We ought to distinguish between the promises of kings, and those of their subjects; the latter may be compell'd to the performance of their promises by a temporal power, because they are subject to men, but princes being accountable only to God, are not under the same predicament. The engagements into which they enter with their people are not however useless, because they cannot be compell'd to adhere to them, in as much as they are binding before God, and in that light checks to their wills.

Reason, and the publick tranquility may both be urged to establish this doctrine. For if it be admitted,

ed, that under a pretence of violating the laws, princes may be dethroned, to what mischiefs and inconveniences would all governments be exposed? The people inconstant, whimsical, wholly inclined to change, would be subject to all impressions, and be at all times ready to revolt. Restless and unquiet spirits will always find specious pretexts to excuse these seditions and troubles; so, in the end, peace would be lost. "I acknowledge," says Grotius*, "that kings are established to no other end than that they might administer justice to their subjects; but it does not follow from hence, that the people are above their kings. Guardians are assigned without doubt for the good of their pupils, and yet this trust gives a power to the guardian over his ward. I know it will be said, that a guardian who is guilty of male-administration may be discharged from his trust, from whence some would conclude, that the people have the same right with respect to the prince. But the case is very different; for the guardian hath a superior on whom he depends, whereas the prince has none. As infinite things there cannot be an infinite progression, so it is absolutely necessary to stop at him; or in republicks, at a senate independant of all other powers except God."

If we attentively consider these reasons, it is impossible, my friend, that we should not yield to them, and agree that in contracts between subjects and sovereigns, reason and the publick good require, that Heaven only should judge of the infractions of which the latter are guilty.

Those who take upon themselves the characters of advocates for the rights of the people, fancy that the respect we alledge due to princes, is the mere effect of prejudice, which we want spirit enough to get over. But in this they are deceived, and it is easy to prove the contrary from the examples of many great men, who, tho' born under a republick,

* Hugo Grotius, tom. 1. p. 106.

excessively jealous of its liberty, have nevertheless maintained, that it never can be lawful to take up arms against sovereigns, whatever faults they commit. "We must, says an illustrious Roman, bear "the luxury or avarice of our governors as we do "dear years, storms, and other irregularities in "nature. There will be vices as long as there are "men, but the mischiefs flowing from them are "neither constant nor perpetual; on the contrary, "there are times, in which we are indemnified for "these mischiefs by the benefits we receive *."

Is it possible, my friend, to say, that a man brought up in the midst of Rome, and who had imbibed from his tender youth republican principles, should be persuaded that great respect is due even to bad princes through any sort of prejudice? I cannot believe that any man living would advance such an absurdity.

Fare thee well, Isaac, may the God of our fathers give thee continual prosperity.

LETTER CXXXVI.

Character of the English courtiers, very different from those of France, and most other nations.—A man of quality meets with no respect in England, unless he be, at the same time, a man of merit.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

London—

MEN of quality in this country are as little attach'd to the court, as the meaner sort of people are to them. For as the people shew no respect to a lord, farther than his virtues and good qualities demand, so the nobility in general adhere to

* Tit. Liv. Hist. lib. iv. cap. lxxiv. num. 4.

the court only so long as it appears to have no designs contrary to the welfare of the people..

One thing, dear Isaac, is very extraordinary in England, and that is, to observe a sincere love for their country, in men whose employments oblige them to be about the court. In all other countries, courtier and slave are synonymous terms ; and with reason, the vices of princes being as much adored by such men as their persons. But here, the virtue and probity of the prince attracts veneration ; when they discern in their sovereign any faults which may be prejudicial to their country, instead of flattering his defects, they provide the best they can against it.

This grandeur of soul is the natural consequence of the thinking disposition of the English, who generally speaking, decline employments, and content themselves with the pleasures of a private and retired life. In France, all the gentlemen are naturally attached to the court, even such as live in the provinces are so accustomed to enjoy little employments, that without them they cannot believe themselves happy, or in a situation worthy of their birth. Among them the love of their country is a mere chimæra. What signifies the misfortunes of their countrymen to them, if they can but have the pleasure of arriving, some way or other, at an employment which puts it in their power to revenge themselves upon such as have slighted, malreated or injured them, while they were yet but private men ? The English think quite otherwise ; there is not a man amongst them who has any ambition to be the first slave. The character of independency appears more elevated to them than that shining servitude which charms most men in the other courts of Europe. In this country there are many private men, who would refuse even the highest posts of honour, if they were to be attended with the loss of freedom of sentiment, and that liberty of action which is their delight.

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It is in England, my dear Isaac, where it may be said, that truth is carried even to the throne, and appears there with lustre. Happy the nation since this custom hath been introduced! The prince too hath found his advantage therefrom, by being delivered from those errors into which inattention or his passions betrayed him, by representations prudent and sincere. No monarch ever repented of his listening to the advice of those who set his faults before him freely and truly, whereas many kings have been misled, not a few totally destroyed by listening to base flatteries. "There is no condition of life," says Montaigne, "which stands in need of more free and smart advertisements than that of sovereign authority. Kings frequently find themselves, before they are aware, engaged in the hatred and destruction of their people, by steps they might have easily avoided. Generally speaking, favourites look more to their own affairs than to those of their masters; and in some measure they are in the right. For to speak the truth, the liberties of a true friendship are rude and perilous attempts when exercised towards a prince*."

It is to themselves, my friend, that courtiers owe this unlucky situation, which Montaigne so well describes, "the liberties of a true friendship are rude and perilous attempts when exercised towards a prince." If they all thought as the English do, they would never bring themselves to such a pass as not to dare to exercise their reason, and to look upon truth as a dangerous and impracticable virtue. They would by this means have preserved a right of being useful to their masters, instead of encouraging their faults, by treating them as so many excellent qualities.

The same good sense which hinders courtiers and men of quality from being slaves in England to the superior dignity of their prince, teaches them also how to support their own quality, without suffering

* Montaigne's Essays, Book III.

their grandeur to turn their heads. We very rarely see here men magnificently dress'd assuming high airs of state, speaking in an elevated tone, talking everlastingly of their birth, their dependants, their horses, strutting a tiptoe, hoisting their shoulders up, taking snuff, adjusting their perukes, and then deciding peremptorily, and with the air of an oracle on things of the utmost importance, smiling or singing while one is talking to them, and seldom deigning to make an answer in more than two words. A man of this character, I say, is not commonly met with at London; and when he is, these affected airs which would make him seem somebody in another place, render him here hateful to the populace, and ridiculous to his equals.

Ignorance is a vice which has very few partizans in this country, even among men of quality. Instead of blushing at a strict application to the sciences, they shew the utmost contempt for such as conceive it a declining the privilege of nobility to trouble themselves with more knowledge than that of being able to read tolerably and write a common letter. In more countries than one, a man that with a certain air can say a pleasant thing, is look'd upon as a fine fellow; in England he would be stiled a blockhead without mercy, because there things receive their value from their worth; a lord who can sing and talk nonsense to a woman, is in that country a coxcomb. He who has these phrases everlasting in his mouth, 'A man of my quality, a person of my birth,' is laughed at and derided. Had he all the quality of the Venetian senate put together, and nothing else to recommend him, he would meet but with little esteem at London.

It is in that country absolutely necessary to have merit in order to have credit. Nobility has indeed privileges, but those privileges are merely honorary. A lord who is incapable of distinguishing himself by his parts, must console himself with them as well as he can. A Swiss author introduces a lord describing his own situation very emphatically, that is, such a lord

lord as hath nothing but what he derives from his birth. "It is true, says he, we cannot be arrested for our debts, but then it is but here and there we can find credit. Instead of an oath, we say upon our honours; but to balance this, we are seldom believed: there is indeed a law to prevent people from speaking ill of us; but if his lordship is too busy with his cane, his lordship may be beat*." It is true, dear Isaac; all this must not be literally taken, but however, it is sufficient to shew, that in England, how great soever a man's quality is, he must have merit also to render him considerable. You need not therefore be surprized at seeing more men of quality patrons of the sciences in this country than elsewhere; ambition and the desire of glory excite in them quite different passions than are felt by men of their rank in other countries, where their heads are turn'd to other things. A Frenchman thinks himself illustrious enough in right of his coaches, horses, domesticks, furniture and fine clothes; an Englishman admits, that these have nothing to do with merit, and that all these trifles do not contribute to raise his character in the least.

There is yet another reason which forces people of distinction in this country to cultivate sciences and the Belles Lettres. It is the necessity they are under of understanding ancient and modern policies, which is a kind of knowledge for which they find frequent occasion. Not only lords, but all men of such a rank as hope for any employments, are obliged to be well versed in history and politicks. "In England, says an illustrious author, "Men commonly think, and learning is even in greater credit there than here. This advantage is the natural consequence of their form of government; there are in London near seven or eight hundred persons who have a right to speak in publick, and to support the interest of the nation. At least, five or six thousand pretend to this honour in their turns. All the rest

* Muralt's Letters on the English nation.

pretend

pretend to judge of the behaviour of this people. Every man may print what he thinks fit on publick affairs. Thus the whole nation is under a necessity of knowing more than any other nation. One hears nothing talk'd of but the government of Rome and Athens. A man is forced, whether he will or will not, to read the authors who treat of these things; this study naturally leads a man to the Belles Lettres. In short, every man is a sort of a statesman. How comes it, that our magistrates, our lawyers, our physicians, our ecclesiasticks, have more learning, a better taste, and a greater share of wit than the rest of the French nation? Is it not truly, because their condition of life requires a greater cultivation of the mind*?"

See then, dear Isaac, the essential cause of the difference there is between English and French couriers. The first need nothing to recommend them but patience, suppleness, and a little court-craft. On the contrary, the latter cannot succeed but in sight of superior knowledge, good sense and requisite learning; these, and these only, being the arts by which rivals are to be overcome.

Before I finish my letter, I must take notice to you, dear Isaac, of one of the privileges of the nobility in his country. Whoever ventures to libel them is liable to suffer deeply in his pocket. This is settled by an express law †; and I have been told on this subject a whimsical story: The son of a rich inn-keeper having been lucky enough to please the wife of a man of quality, did not apprehend that this could prove any bar to his endeavours in this way. He had the good luck to succeed in his amour, and the lord had the good luck, if it can be called, to find it out; upon which he used means to procure a divorce, but failing of the necessary proof in the proper court, he was forced to content himself with recovering damages against the inn-

* Voltaire's Letters, Let. xx.

† He means the action of Scandalum Magnum.

keeper's son: Since this affair it is a settled point, that a man fails in his respect to the nobility, when he becomes too agreeable to their wives. However, there are some arch people who scruple not to say, that there are sprightly fellows who will ogle women of quality, tho' at the hazard of their fortunes. If the men of title in Italy had any privilege of this sort, I dare say they would be as tender of it as the English are of their liberty*.

Adieu, dear Isaac, may the God of our Fathers cover thee with blessings.

LETTER. CXXXVII.

An extract taken from a French historical and political journal relating to Vampires, i. e. persons who after their decease suck the blood of others, and deprive them of life.—Philosophical observations thereon.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

London—

I HAVE read, my dear Isaac, the relation of a prodigy inserted in an † historical journal, and find in it some things so particular, that I persuade myself you will concur with me in opinion, that the facts contained therein are absolutely irreconcileable to philosophic speculations, and all the efforts of the reasoning faculty. I will first give you a faithful extract of what I have read, and then my sincere opinion of the supernatural things therein contained.

* Our author hath been not a little mistaken in this matter, which is the only story of the D. of N. suing Sir John Germaine, who was an Inn-keeper's son at the Hague, notwithstanding the statue of Scan. Mag. but on an action of the cause, for criminal conversation with his dutchess.

† Mercure Historique et Politique, Octob. 1736, p. 42 to 411.

" We have had in this country a new scene of
" vampirism, which is duly attested by two officers
" of the tribunal of Belgrade, who took cogni-
" zance of the affair on the spot, and by an officer
" in his imperial majesty's troops at Gradisch (in
" Sclavonia) who was an eye-witness of the pro-
" ceedings.

" In the beginning of September there died at
" the village of Kisilova, three leagues from Gra-
" disch, an old man of above threescore and two:
" three days after he was buried he appeared in
" in the night to his son, and desired he would give
" him somewhat to eat. The son did so, the fa-
" ther eat, and then disappeared. The next day
" the son told his neighbours these particulars.
" That night the father did not come, but the
" next evening he made him another visit, and
" desired something to eat. It is not known whe-
" ther his son gave him any thing or not, but the
" next morning the young man was found dead
" in his bed. The magistrate or bailiff of the
" place had notice of this, as also that the same
" day five or six persons fell sick in the village,
" and died one after the other. He sent an exact
" account of this to the tribunal of Belgrade, and
" thereupon two commissioners were dispatched to
" the village attended by an executioner, with
" instructions to examine closely into the affair.
" An officer in the imperial service, from whom
" we have this relation, went also from Gradisch,
" in order to examine personally an affair of which
" he had heard so much. They opened in
" the first place the graves of all who had been
" buried in six weeks. When they came to that
" of the old man, they found his eyes open, his
" colour fresh, his respiration quick and strong,
" yet he appeared to be stiff and insensible. From
" these signs they concluded him to be a notorious
" Vampire. The executioner thereupon, by the
" command of the commissioners, struck a stake
" thro' his heart; and when they had so done,
Vol. III. U " they

“ they made a bonfire, and therein consumed the
“ carcase to ashes. There was no marks of vam-
“ pirism found on his son, or on the bodies of
“ the other persons who died so suddenly.

“ Thanks be to God, we are as far as any
“ people can be from giving into credulity, we
“ acknowledge that all the lights of physick do
“ not enable us to give any account of this fact,
“ nor do we pretend to enter into its causes.
“ However, we cannot avoid giving credit to a
“ matter of fact juridically attested by competent
“ and unsuspected witnesses, especially since it is far
“ from being the only one of the kind. We shall
“ here annex an instance of the same sort in 1732,
“ already inserted in the Gleaner, No. 18.

“ In a certain canton of Hungary, which is cal-
“ led in Latin Oppida Heidonus, on the other side
“ the Tibiscus, vulgarly called the Teysse; that is to
“ say, the river which washes the celebrated ter-
“ ritory of Tokay, as also a part of Transilvania.
“ The people known by the name of Heydukes be-
“ lieve that certain dead persons, whom they call
“ vampires, suck the blood of the living, inso-
“ much that these people appear like skeletons,
“ while the dead bodies of the suckers are so full of
“ blood, that it runs out at all the passages of their
“ bodies, and even at their very pores. This odd
“ opinion of theirs they support by a multitude of
“ facts attested in such a manner, that they leave
“ no room for doubt. We shall here mention some
“ of the most considerable.

“ It is now about five Years ago, that a certain
“ Heyduke an inhabitant of the village of Medreiga,
“ whose name was Arnold Paul, was bruised to
“ death by a hay-cart, which ran over him.
“ Thirty days after his death, no less than four
“ persons died suddenly, in that manner wherein
“ according to the tradition of the country, those
“ people generally die who are suck'd by vampires.
“ Upon this a story was called to mind, that this
“ Arnold Paul had told in his life-time, viz. that

" at Cossova on the frontiers of the Turkish Servia, " he had been tormented by a vampire ; (now the " established opinion is, that a person suck'd by a " vampire, becomes a vampire himself, and sucks " in his turn.) But that he had found a way to " rid himself of this evil, by eating some of the " earth out of the vampire's grave, and rubbing " himself with his blood. This precaution however " did not hinder his becoming a vampire ; insomuch " that his body being taken up forty days after " his death, all the marks of a notorious vampire " were found thereon. His complexion was fresh, " his hair, nails, and beard were grown ; he was " full of fluid blood, which ran from all parts of " his body upon his shroud. The hadnagy or " bailiff of the place, who was present at the tak- " ing of him up, and who was a person well ac- " quainted with vampirism, caused a sharp stake " to be thrust, as the custom is, through the " heart of Arnold Paul, and also quite through his " body ; whereupon he cried out dreadfully as if he " had been alive. This done, they cut off his head, " burnt his body, and threw the ashes thereof into " the Saave. They took the same measures with " the bodies of those persons who had died of " vampirism, for fear that they should fall to suck- " ing in their turns.

" All these prudent steps did not hinder the same " mischief from breaking out again about five " years afterwards, when several people in the " same village died in a very odd manner. In the " space of three months, seventeen persons of all " ages and sexes died of vampirism, some sud- " denly, and some after two or three days suffer- " ing. Amongst others there was one Stanoska, " the daughter of a Heyduke, whose name was " Jovitzo, who going to bed in perfect health, " waked in the middle of the night, and making " a terrible outcry, affirmed that the son of a cer- " tain Heyduke whose name was Millo, and who " had been dead about three weeks, had attempt-

" ed to strangle her in her sleep. She continued
" from that time in a languishing condition, and
" in the space of three days died. What this
" girl had said, discovered the son of Millo to be
" a vampire. They took up the body, and found
" him so in effect. The principal persons of the
" place, particularly the physician and surgeons,
" began to examine very narrowly, how, in spite
" of all their precautions, vampirism had again
" broke out in so terrible a manner. After a strict
" inquisition, they found that the deceased Arnold
" Paul had not only suck'd the four persons before
" mentioned, but likewise several beasts, of whom
" the new vampires had eaten, particularly the
" son of Millo. Induced by these circumstances,
" they took a resolution, of digging up the bo-
" dies of all persons who had died within a certain
" time. They did so, and amongst forty bodies,
" there were found seventeen evidently vam-
" pires. Through the hearts of these they drove
" stakes, cut off their heads, burnt the bodies,
" and threw the ashes into the river. All the
" informations we have been speaking of were ta-
" ken in a legal way, and all the executions were
" also so performed, as appears by certificates
" drawn up in full form, attested by several off-
" cers in the neighbouring garrisons, by the sur-
" geons of several regiments, and the principal in-
" habitants of the place. The verbal proces was
" sent towards the latter end of last January to the
" council of war at Vienna, who thereupon estab-
" lished a special commission to examine into these
" facts. Those just now mentioned were attested
" by the Hadnagi Barriarar, the principal Heyduke
" of the village, as also by Battuer, first lieute-
" nant of prince Alexander of Wirtemberg, Flick-
" stenger, surgeon Major of the regiment of Fur-
" stemberg, three other surgeons of the same regi-
" ment, and several other persons."

I thought proper, my dear Isaac, to lay before
you all the strange stories that have been related of
vampires,

vampires, that you might the better judge of the matter, and that the circumstances of one story might serve to enlighten another. I shall impatiently expect your sentiments, and in the mean time shall give you my own freely.

There are two different methods whereby the falsity of this opinion, that dead persons can return and suck the living may be demonstrated; that is to say, the fact may be shewn to be impossible. First, by explaining by the means of physical causes all that is attributed to vampirism; and secondly, by denying totally the truth of these stories, which I take to be the safest and wisest way. But inasmuch as the names of the persons who have signed this relation give such an authority thereto, as serves to render it credible; I shall, before I proceed to shew how little respect is due to these authorities in philosophical matters, admit that several persons have died of that malady, which is called vampirism.

I lay this down as a principle, that it is possible to find bodies, which after having been some days interred, have fluid blood in their veins; I likewise assert that it is an easy matter for people to fancy that they have been sucked by vampires, and so to terrify themselves by these apprehensions, as in a short time to die of fright: For having their heads full all day of these strange stories, what wonder is it, if at Night, and in their dreams, these ideas should still disturb their imagination, and produce that effect which terror often produces, immediate or consequential death? How often have we seen persons die away on the news of some terrible misfortune? How frequently has even excessive joy produced the same effect?

In examining the story of the death of these pretended martyrs to vampirism, I discover all the marks of an epidemic fanaticism, and I see clearly that the impressions of their own fears was the true cause of their destruction. Mark the story

of the Heyduke's daughter ; she went to bed well, awakened in the middle of the night, cry'd out that she had been attack'd by a vampire, named a certain dead person she had been thinking of, continued in a languishing condition for some days, and then died. Whoever has eyes, and ever so little notion of philosophy, will easily discern that this pretended vampirism is the pure effects of a heated imagination. Here is a girl who, by her crying out, pretends to have avoided being sucked by a vampire ; certain it is that she escaped the three other nights, when to be sure there were people who sat up with her. Is not this a clear and demonstrative proof, that she did not die of vampirism, but of terror, apprehension and melancholy ?

Those who have been in places afflicted with the plague, know by experience what strange consequences fear can produce. The moment a man is a little out of order, he takes it for granted that he is struck with the epidemick malady, and this alarms him so much, that 'tis ten to one if he escapes. The chevalier de Maisin told me at Paris, that being at Marseilles when the plague raged there, he actually knew an instance of a woman's dying with fear on her maid's being seized with an ague, which she took for the plague. This woman's daughter also fell into a mortal illness from the same cause. Two other persons in the same house took their beds, sent for a physician, and told them they had the plague. The same physician visited the maid-servant, and the rest of the persons who were sick, and assured them that none of them had the plague, advised them to rise, to go about the house, and to live as they were wont, and not to frighten themselves. But with respect to the mistress of the family, his care was all in vain, for in the space of two days, as I have told you, she died of mere apprehension.

Let me now, my friend, examine the first relation, that of the young man who died by be-

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ing suck'd by his dead father ; be pleased to consider the circumstances, and you will see that he died in truth of fear, of folly, or of the vapours. The story he told his neighbours the first morning, is a proof that his imagination was disturbed, and that he was excessively frightened. This first attack of his ill-grounded fear, served to distemper his reason, and to render him less able to resist the next return of his pannick. Accordingly, when it did surprize him, it produced the effect which might naturally be expected ; it overcame his animal spirits, and deprived him of life. You will take notice, my dear Isaac, that this did not happen the next night, very probably for this reason, because his neighbours watched with him, and thereby kept up his courage ; or in other words parry'd the attack.

I come next to speak of the dead bodies which were found full of blood, their beards, nails, and hair of their heads grown, and all the other circumstances. Of all these strange things, if we admit the truth of any part, we shall be as complaisant as can be expected ; for to be sure the greatest part of the circumstances were pure imagination. All philosophers know how ready the people in general are, and even what a propensity there is in some historians to magnify whatever has the air of being supernatural. However, not to insist too much upon this, it is far from being impossible to account physically for these circumstances.

Experience teaches us, that there are certain earths which have a property of preserving bodies put into them for a long time as fresh as when they were put into the ground. The reasons of which have been so often stated, that it would be tedious, and at the same time needless in me to repeat them. At Thoulouse there is a vault belonging to the church of a monastery, where dead bodies remain so entire, that even after two hundred

dred years continuance there, they seem as fresh as when first buried; they set them against the wall in their ordinary clothes, and they look as if they were alive. What is still more extraordinary, bodies buried on the other side of the vault, become food for worms in a day or two at most.

As to the growing of the nails, the hair, and the beard, the same thing is frequently observed in dead bodies in all places. So long as there remains any moisture in the body, we need not be surprized if those parts grow which require only moisture to supply them.

The fluidness of the blood, and its being found liquid in the veins, seems the greatest difficulty; and yet even this may be so well accounted for by phynical causes, as to shut out all necessity of having recourse to miracles. With respect to this, I say, that the heat of the sun rarifying the nitrous damps in the graves, where the bodies lie, enables thereby many of those nitrous particles to insinuate themselves into the body, where entring the blood, and causing a fermentation, they may dissolve that coagulum occasioned by death, and make it by degrees, not flow indeed, but become liquid in the veins. This is the more probable, because something like it may be performed by a very easy experiment. For if we boil in a pipkin two parts of milk, with one of oil of tartar, the liquor will become red, because the salts in the tartar dissolve the oily parts in the milk, and turn it into a kind of blood; it is true that blood is naturally of a more florid colour, but it differs very little in consistence. There is therefore nothing impossible in this supposition, that the juices in the dead body, by nitrous particles fermenting with them, may furnish a liquor nearly resembling blood; especially if we consider that these juices in their natural state are very oily, and consequently must by such a fermentation be of a very high colour.

You see, dear Isaac, that without absolutely denying every particular in the certificates, it is very possible to rid ourselves of the strangest circumstances in these stories. To say the truth, it would be ridiculous to give any credit to them, however attested: For either these vampires actually go out to suck, or they do not. If they go out, then they must be visible, or they must be invisible, as it should seem they are; for upon coming to the assistance of those who cry out, there is nothing to be seen. It follows then that the bodies do not go out. This point being gained, we must suppose that it is the soul. Now the soul is either spiritual, or composed of a very subtle matter; shall we suppose then, that in this subtle matter the blood is carried to the grave, and there poured into the body? Is not this sending the soul of a strange errand? To say the truth, my dear Isaac, I am ashamed to spend so much time in exposing vampirism, and find myself percisely in the situation of that Nazarene doctor, who said, that he blushed for those whom he refuted, and at the necessity he was under of speaking to them in such terms*. I told you at first, that there was very small heed to be given to these wonderful certificates, which when throughly examined, have really very little authority.

Farewel, Isaac, live well, contented and happy.

* Sed jam pudet me ista resellere, dum eos non puduerit illa sentire. Cum vero ausi sint etiam ea defendere, non jam eorum, sed ipsius generis humani, me pudet, cuius aures haec ferre potuerunt. Aug. Epist. LVI.

LETTER CXXXVIII.

A great number of different sects of religion in England.—All who possess offices under the government must be of the established religion of the kingdom—An account of the heats and disputes between the Churchmen and the Presbyterians.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

London.—

THERE are in this country, dear Isaac, as many different sects as in Holland. The English are too jealous of their liberty to submit to the necessity of thinking in one way, or to be withheld from striking out now and then, to see what sort of country the land of error is. They will make use of their reason in all their actions, and can by no means think of becoming slaves to the notions of some particular divines.

Though every man be at liberty in England to follow what religion he pleases, yet what is emphatically called the church prevails. The king, and all the people of quality almost are members thereof, and some of them zealous enough. It is requisite to profess one's self a churchman, in order to possess any office or employment in the state in England or Ireland. The very name implies that it is the chief faith, and as it were the religion of the state. The Nonconformists however do not usually call it the church, or its members churchmen, but cavalierly enough the partizans of the bishops; for whatever the English may have borrowed from the sentiments of Calvin, their common-prayer, and their church ceremonies, favour not at all of that divine: on the contrary, they come nearer to the church of Rome, especially in their cathedral worship, which hath a very great resemblance thereto. The bishops, who are in number twenty-six, have their archdeacons,

who

who have jurisdiction over the priests in their dioceses. All the clergy, of whatever degree, are very exact in receiving their tithes, and other ecclesiastical dues; these, however popish, they conscientiously retain, and very piously fenced against the reformation's breaking in here. The bishops have even a seat in the house of lords; but as the canon law does not permit them to give their voices in matters of blood, so when their enemies are to be destroyed, they can do no more than cabal against them.

While the English were yet in the humour of burning protestants for the glory of God, the single determination of one of these pontiffs sent a man to the stake. At present there is nothing like this, people of all religions are safe from fire, tho' not from the rage of the ecclesiasticks. The priests of the different sects hate one another mortally, and their ill humour frequently diffuses itself thro' their flocks. There have been some bishops who would have given ten years revenue to have indulged themselves their full swing in persecuting the Nonconformists; as these again, on the other hand, would be infinitely overjoyed, could they but absolutely extinguish episcopacy, and destroy that priestly pomp the sight of which they bear with so much pain. For you must know, that notwithstanding the fundamental points are the same with Churchmen, and with Presbyterians, yet that heat with which they espouse those differences, which all of them own to be unessential, is so violent, that it has sometimes come to shedding of blood. Thus by an incomprehensible madness, at the same time that the papists ardently endeavour the destruction of all protestants, protestants themselves contribute to facilitate their designs by mutually destroying each other, or at least contributing to each other's destruction, only because they are called by the different names of Churchmen and Presbyterians. You may very possibly be desirous of knowing what are the sources of these divisions; it is by chance in my power to give you

you some account of this matter, especially in respect to the French and Walloon Presbyterian refugees in England.

I was going t'other day with one of my friends by the French church, he desired I would go in and hear the sermon : you know it is a custom with me to go into the places of devotion of all sects, in order the better to comprehend their doctrines, and their ceremonies ; I therefore readily agreed to his proposal, and in we went. I was perfectly ravished with the modest and sober beginning of the preacher's discourse ; yet before he had well opened it, I heard a prodigious noise in the church. All who were present began to act like the convulsionists in France, one cough'd, another sneez'd, some shook their heads most of them put their hands to their hats ; but above all, some people in a gallery over-against me seemed to lose all sort of patience ; they spread out their arms, and put themselves into such ridiculous postures that I could not forbear asking my friend what was the matter : but gues's my surprize, when on turning towards him, I saw him playing tricks like the rest. Lord bless me, said I, what is the matter ? is it thus you behave in a place of publick worship ! let us go out, said he, I find it is impossible for me to keep my temper, or to avoid giving a publick testimony of the just sense I have of the affront offered to our church. Upon this, up he started, and out he went, followed by at least three fourths of the congregation. Pray tell me, said I, when we were in the street, what this matter is ; is there in your religion any feasts which approach the ancient bacchanalia, or have your priests the power of turning your heads before they have well opened their mouths ! ah ! that preacher, said he, hath violated one of our most sacred rites ; I will tell you his crime ; he had the assurance to preach without putting on his hat. Bless me, reply'd I, what great harm was there in that ? would his doctrine have been a grain the worse on this account ? do you think that having a hat on alters a man's thoughts, or that it gives him clearer

or brighter ideas, than if his head was uncovered? I now begin to understand what you all meant by clapping your hands to your hats; at first I must own that I thought you were all distracted. It were to be wish'd said my friend, that we had still had less patience, and that we had ordered the man to hold his tongue; what will the world say, when they shall hear what has passed at our worship to-day? they will think us a sort of amphibious creatures; they will expect next to see us go to the established church: this comes of the folly of letting strange ministers preach without acquainting them with the rules and orders of our congregation.

Surprized at what I heard, I could not help saying, and do you place this among the number of the grievances which keep you out of what the people call here the church? yes! said he hastily, I do; their bowing, their vestments, their surplices, and their episcopal robes are like this, and all impure rags of popery. It seems then, returned I, that you dispute warmly about trifles. How is it possible, that you who look upon all ceremonies as indifferent, should notwithstanding believe there is any thing in a man's wearing a longer or a shorter garment, in his appearing in a black robe or a white? did your legislator, and his primitive disciples leave you patterns for clothes? is there any thing in your sacred books about how many ells of stuff are to enter into a priest's garment?

My pleasantries were very far from pleasing my friend, who was a zealous Presbyterian. I see, says he, you affect to justify the church, yet let me tell you, that you act in this contrary to the Jews, who follow our custom in their synagogue. That is true, said I, because it is our custom, and universally received amongst the Israelites. We act in this respect uniformly in all countries where the people dress in wigs, and where they dress in turbans; amongst the Turks, the Persians, &c. we never uncover our heads. But we look upon this purely as a civil rite, and not at all as a thing essential to religion. You do well, reply'd my friend, you have a right to act

as you please, and so have we; while there are French and Walloon presbyterians, there will, thanks be to God, be found men who will stick to their own customs, and preach with their hats on, in spight of all the lordly prelates upon earth. Saying this, he turned about, and left me abruptly, and with an air of discontent.

You must not be surprized, my dear Isaac, at this want of decorum in my friend, or at the intemperance of his zeal. The presbyterians in general are excessively prejudiced in favour of their mode of worship, and of all their customs. They are morose and very petulant, and have no sort of complaisance. If you attempt in the veriest trifles to put them out of their way. The greater credit their adversaries have, the greater obstinacy they put on. It would be an easier task to persuade the Jansenists to accept the bull Unigenitus, than to persuade the presbyterians to put their hats on when the psalms are sung, or to put them off, when they are only read. Behold, dear Isaac, for what whimsies these people contend. A man must be very fond of the title of nonconformity, who merely for the sake thereof would refuse to quit such ridiculous customs.

You must not fancy that the churchmen in this country, are a grain more reasonable, or less whimsical. If one of their preachers was to put on his hat, it would put his whole congregation in a flame; and they had rather see all the nonconformists in the universe perish, than shew them so much brotherly love and tenderness as to part with their surplice, or the several genuflexions of their clergy in the celebration of divine service. You are an obstinate crew, say they imperiously to the presbyterians, who will not be persuaded to listen to the church in things which are confessedly indifferent. You are persecutors, reply the presbyterians fiercely, inasmuch as you would tyrannically subject us to customs of human invention. It is precisely because they are indifferent, that you are inexcusable, because while you confess

confess them to be such, you would compel us to receive and to submit to them, tho' we know this to be a thing indifferent.

The dress and countenances of the presbyterians, especially of their preachers, answers exactly their true character; they walk gravely, and with a very stiff air; their heads and faces are in a manner hid by overgrown hats, and their shoulders covered with a most enormous large cloak. If one of these reverend persons was to appear at Paris, he would be taken for some grave old divine, who by appealing to some future council, had embarras'd himself with his bishop, and was in absolute disgrace at court.

A clergyman of the church is quite another creature; he is dressed in a light easy cassock, tied with a surcingle; over this he wears a large flowing and magnificent robe, very gracefully gathered on his shoulders into a hundred plaits; a good wig well powdered, or light enough to want none, sets off his face, and an excellent good beaver with a comely hat-band and rose surmount this. Thus equipped, they resemble strongly the better sort of ecclesiasticks in France, who pique themselves upon dress, and are frequently to be met with in great cities, haughty, superb, and scornful. Such a clergyman looks down on other mortals as pitiful insects scarce worthy of his attention, considering himself as already a bishop, and in consequence thereof a member of the house of lords. Glad at his heart to see the Presbyterians express a dislike at his grandeur, laughing within himself to think that this very dislike keeps them out of the road of acquiring it; and instead of desiring to unite him and the rest of the non-conformists to the faith he professes, he thinks of nothing but forcing their obedience, which without ceremony he practises whenever it lies in his power. In a word, fierce and untractable, because he is of the establish'd religion, he would have all things bend before him; and to paint him to the life, do but figure to yourself, Isaac, a jesuit, who to convert all the protestants in the world, would not part

with a single lamp which burns before the image of St. Ignatius, the chief and lawgiver of his order.

I own that when I left Paris, I thought I had lost for ever the Jansenists and the Molinists: but since my arrival in England, I have found them again in the churchmen and dissenters, who have copied them so perfectly, that if miracles were in fashion here, as in France and in Italy, I should not question in the least seeing now and then an English prelate canonized, for having been zealous in persecuting Non Cons, or many dissenters in convulsions at the grave of some saint Paris of their own fraternity.

The English make a jest of the religious disputes which at this day divide France, and they have certainly reason. There cannot be a greater weakness, or a more flagrant sign of the superstition amongst any nation, than their being the dupes of the hatred, ambition, and false faith of certain bold ecclesiastics, who under pretence of enlightening certain points of doctrine, disturb society, and in the end interest the state in their petty quarrels. After all, are not the English however in the same condition with the French? Are not the church divines as desirous of inflaming their zealots against the nonconformists? If it depended upon them, will they not force all the world to blind obedience, even tho' it were at the expence of half mankind? Are not they infinitely delighted with that share they have in the government, and do they not make the utmost use of it they are able? In short, can there be found a more perfect copy of the French Jesuit, than in the English high-churchman? Or can two people resemble each other more than the Presbyterian and the Jansenist? These last are equally obstinate in their opinions; they declaim constantly and loudly against all honours and preferments, with which however it is impossible that either should be troubled. They affect a morose air, a twang through the nose in preaching, a kind of Querpo dres, are declared enemies to pleasure, hate their enemies devoutly, are excessively

excessively ambitious ; and cloak all these hopeful qualities with exterior piety. Can mortals resemble one another more perfectly ?

You must therefore, dear Isaac, acknowledge, that the English very unjustly reproach the French with the troubles which Molinism and Jansenism create in their country. It would be easy for the French to justify themselves by recriminating. I do admit, that the madness of one people cannot justify the madness of another, but however it may serve to excuse it. Every where if you find divines, you find amongst them ambition, jealousy, vanity, and of consequence disputes and persecution. The common people but too readily adhere to different opinions, just as they strike them. They have neither sense enough to fathom them, nor prudence enough to avoid them. We need not then be astonished that they follow blindly the guides they have made choice of. At London the state acts with respect to the church and the presbyterians, just as at Paris between the Molinists and the Jansenists, and always without knowing why it inclines rather this way than that. If there were none but philosophers and divines in the world, the latter would certainly be obliged to abandon their disputes, for want of finding disciples to maintain them.

Farewel, dear Isaac, live happy and content, and may the God of our fathers remove far from thee a pertinacious disputing spirit.

LETTER CXXXIX.

The partiality of the English blamed.—Some critical observations on the works of Gassendi, Newton, Locke, Descartes and Mallebranche.—In the opinion of Monceca, Newton has built on the plan of Gassendi; and on comparison, finds, that Newton excels Descartes, and Locke is superior to Mallebranche in philosophical enquiries.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

London.—

THE English, my friend, are persuaded, that with respect to the sciences they excel all other nations. They imagine that nature hath furnished them with talents, which she hath denied to other people. When they are told that there is no convincing reason appears in justification of this their assertion, and that there is something very odd in supposing that a man born ten leagues off their shore, or indeed that any two men born ten leagues asunder, should not have as much wit the one as the other; they presently run you over a list of their celebrated authors, characterize each of them in a pompous manner, and then put the question; Why, if the thing be not as they say, are there not as many great men found in any other nation? Such as dispute unfairly with the English, and such as cannot get over their natural prejudices, endeavour to rid themselves of this difficulty, by denying that the authors of whom the English boast are at all superior to those of other nations. But if we speak truly and sincerely, we must confess that this objection is not easily shifted off. It must on the contrary be owned, that the English have amongst them writings, which seem to have been dictated by persons of more than human capacity. Whoever has read Locke and Newton with such application as is necessary, in order to taste the excellency of their writings,

writings, cannot but be convinced that there are among the English certain learned persons who think more freely, and more solidly, than the learned in other nations.

I know, dear Isaac, that the liberty which the people enjoy here, gives a certain hardness and elevation of mind which is not to be found in many other countries. If we will have men philosophers, we must allow them liberty of thought, and the free use of their reason. It would be as wild and as ridiculous to look for such a person as Locke in Spain, as to think of making an orange grow as happily, and to the same degree of perfection in a little tub as in the open air, and in a soil fit for it. But if there are nations hampered and oppressed, there are also some other nations not a grain less free than the English, and who might therefore give the same loose to their imaginations as they do. Whence then comes it, that even amongst them there are not philosophers equal to the English?

You see, dear Isaac, that some reasons there are which seem at least to favour the opinion the inhabitants of this country have taken up, that there is more wit, and a deeper reach in science amongst them than amongst their neighbours; but after all, these reasons are rather specious than solid: For if things are searched to the bottom, we shall find, that there are among other nations persons of as great and shining parts, as amongst the English, tho' they have not written such perfect pieces. What I advance on this subject will appear a paradox, however there is nothing more certain. In the time that philosophy was obscured by the dark mists thrown thereupon by the commentators of Aristotle and the schoolmen, the English were in the same condition with their neighbours, as much blinded and cramped in their discoveries as they. All the force of their imaginations did not set them at liberty; they were as much the slaves

of

of Aristotle, and as much in love with the essential forms, which was the jargon of his disciples, as those whom they now excel; they submitted to the yoke of the Romish divines, and had schoolmen amongst them as well as elsewhere. A Frenchman, in those days of darkness, had the courage to refuse paying homage to this idol. He did more, he wrote against its worship; and Gassendi, by his learned dissertations against Aristotle, became the forerunner of Descartes, the restorer of true philosophy, and the great scourge of the Peripatetics. Mankind after having been so long plunged amidst visions and chimæras, began on a sudden to use their reason, and to examine opinions before they received them. In consequence of this a multitude of discoveries equally surprizing and useful, succeeded to lying tales and gross puerilities. Nature's abhorring a vacuum was found to be a mere whim, the air appeared to be a heavy body, telescopes were invented, geometry was extended much farther than it had ever been; and by habituating themselves to reason, men went insensibly far greater lengths than at the first themselves could have hoped.

While these happy revolutions were made in the republick of science in France, what passed in England? Little; one might say, nothing. Hobbes, the friend and admirer of Gassendi, was almost the only great philosopher in this country. But what a difference was there between Gassendi and Hobbes? His works *, tho' they have in them good things, may yet be appealed to in proof of the superiority of the French author. We see in them no established system supported by persuasive arguments; in many places he is very hard, and in others not at all to be understood. Where he seems to make

* Elementorum Philosophiae sectio prima de Corpore. See also Prælectiones sex ad professores Savilianos. And another Book, intituled, De Homine, sive Elementorum Philosophiae Sectio secunda.

matter the first cause of all things, he seems to be below Spinoza; where he asserts God to be the creator of the world, he is by no means equal to Descartes, who, to say the truth, opened the eyes of the English Literati.

No sooner they saw their errors, then they began to make extraordinary uses of the lights they had received, and perfected many things which others had but begun; they did that for succeeding generations, which the disciples of Descartes had done for them; that is to say, they put knowledge into a proper train, and left it to be farther cultivated by their posterity.

I make no difficulty of affirming, that there wants as much quickness of thought, and as great strength of genius to distinguish the road to truth in the midit of errors, as to pursue that rout happily when once it is discovered. I do admit, that Newton is much superior both to Descartes and Gassendi. But if the English philosopher had lived at the same time they did, it is possible he might not have gone so far. Consider, my friend, that the first principles of Newton's philosophy, are the same which Gassendi established on the ruin of Peripateticism. The necessity of a void which had been so long exploded, and almost forgotten for twelve hundred years, was first demonstrated by the Gallick sage. It is on this void so strangely recovered, that Newton founds those reasons of his, whereby he shews the positions laid down by Descartes to be impossible. And if by this means he has vanquished the Cartesians, it must be allowed that he does it by virtue of the force borrowed from Gassendi.

I am satisfied, my dear Isaac, that if we reflect attentively we shall see no cause to allow this claim the English put in, to superiority of genius over all other nations. It must be acknowledged that they are actually the greatest philosophers in the world. But as I have shewn they owe this in some measure to the French, so it is not impossible that this nation in its turn may hereafter produce some great man who

who may not only equal, but even exceed the illustrious Newton. But with respect to such as to defeat this claim deny the excellence of the English philosophers, we must necessarily ascribe this to blindness owing either to prejudice or to ignorance. In order to be assured of this, we need only compare the sages of England with those whom their adversaries oppose to them, and the truth will clearly appear.

Descartes destroyed the chimæras of the schoolmen; he taught mankind how to discover the errors of the ancients, and thereby pointed out the means of discovering his own. He made a great progres in Geometry; and we owe to him the application of Algebra to curves. He wanted but little of perfecting Dioptricks, which in his hands became in a manner a new science. He made use in this branch of science that geometrical turn and quicknes of invention with which Heaven had blessed him, and which he had heightened by a most assiduous application. Behold the mighty talents of this man, but remember at the same time his defects. He was deceived in his notions of the soul. His proofs of the being of a God are not always either just or evident. Innate ideas, which he obstinately maintained, have not the least appearance of truth. He has advanced some errors about the laws of motion and the nature of light. He has done still more, he has adapted those puerilities, and that playing with words, with which he reproached the schoolmen. He treats his own term, indefinite, exactly as they were wont to use their terms, alledging that space and matter are not either finite, or infinite. In fine, he would persuade us that his belief was that God could change the essence of things.

Newton did not only make use of the lights, but of the faults of Descartes; he went as far beyond the point where he left Geometry, as Descartes had done beyond that point where he found it. In this respect I must own, that the merit is equal in each of our philosophers. But at the same time it mu

be acknowledged, that Newton is a much greater geometrician than Descartes, and in all the other parts of philosophy he has the same advantage. One may say that Newton has discovered a new world and found the means of explaining the most abstruse things. He has shewn the errors of Descartes as to the nature of light, and which is much more, he has substituted in their stead, principles that are true, and which are demonstrated to be so by many experiments. He has destroyed all his vortices; he has shewn the impossibility of their existence, he has substituted in their place attraction, the effects of which he has demonstrated, and calculated its proportions 'Tis to this philosopher the universe stands indebted for that prodigious knowledge which he brought to light. It was Newton who taught all the learned, to their no small amazement, that a tendency to the center was the sole cause that bodies weigh in proportion to their matter; and that to the same cause was owing the motion of planets and comets. If it were possible to believe that any man might remain unequalled, one would be tempted to suppose it was this philosopher, who has so clearly manifested the laws of nature. At least, it must be acknowledged, that if any one hereafter should arise capable of rivalling this great man, such philosophers as we have at present in the world are infinitely his inferiors.

Some very learned men, and above all the Cartesians, affect to compare Mallebranche with Locke. I find, dear Isaac, the same difference between these philosophers, or at least as great a one as between Newton and Descartes. Mallebranche in his sublime and extravagant illusions appears rather a poet than a philosopher. He aim'd too high, and instead of reaching Heaven as he intended, he has got but half way. So that he can neither discover what he endeavours to find out, nor, by his height, can he penetrate the secrets of men. He admits innate ideas, and also others by which we see all things in God. He could not persuade himself that the existence of bodies could be demonstrated. In a word, his

his philosophy is no more than an ingenious romance which is sometimes very unintelligible.

Locke always wise, and always studious of truth, lays down principles perfectly right, draws consequences from them which are strictly just, is exact in all his proofs, and has displayed all the hidden secrets of the human understanding. He has taught the learned not to decide on any thing which is not thoroughly known. Before his time philosophers had given us their own visions on the nature of the soul for truths, he has destroyed these chimæras, ruined the doctrine of innate ideas, and demonstrated to us that all our ideas are derived to us from our senses. Having anatomized as it were the causes of the human reason, and exposed to mortals all the knowledge it is possible to hope of the essence of the soul, he has made them observe with equal candor and sagacity, that they never could have comprehended the nature of the human mind, if God had not been pleased to grant to a material being the faculty of thinking.

Consider, dear Isaac, how much more certain, more natural, and if I may be allowed the expression, less rarified his sentiments are than those of Malle-branche. Compare the candor and sincerity of the English metaphysician with the presumption and pride of this Frenchman. He not only bounded the power of the Divinity with respect to the souls of men, but adopted a system as ridiculous as it is unsustainable with respect to those of beasts, whom he would have to be mere machines, like to clocks, "eating without pleasure, roaring without pain, neither desiring nor fearing any thing." Certainly, my friend, Malle-branche must have had a great deal of vanity; if he fancied that it was in his power to induce men to take up with such dreams as these. I know very well that he did but follow Descartes who invented them, but he is nothing the less blameable for that, he ought not to have embraced, but to have rejected them. But how came he to take into his head that matter was susceptible of thought; he, I say, who admitted

admitted the existence of bodies out of mere complaisance, and who found fault with his master for not absolutely denying it. "In order to be fully convinced, said he, that there are bodies, it ought not only to be demonstrated that there is a God, and that God will not deceive us, but also that God has assured us, that he has effectually created them, which I do not find proved in any of the words of M. Descartes. God informs the understanding, and obliges us to afford our assent two ways: By evidence, and by faith. I admit that faith obliges us to own that there are bodies, but as for any evidence I see it not. Nor do I think there is any sufficient to enforce our belief*." Do you believe, my friend, that Locke would have ever attempted to prove, that there is nothing exists but God, and our minds? no, no, he was too wise to amuse himself with such blind illusions.

Farewel, dear Isaac, live happy and content, and never become the votary of any philosophy, which is not warranted by reason.

LETTER CXL.

Remarks on the writings of chancellor Bacon.—

Monceca asserts that the English have no good historians, but many excellent poets.—Observations on Milton, Waller, Pope, &c, and some particulars relating to the earl of Rochester

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

London—

In my last letter, dear Isaac, I gave you some account of the English philosophers. In this I propose to continue that account, and to give you some ideas of the other learned men of that country.

* Recherche de la Verite, Eclaircissement sur la 1^e Livre,
499.

You are acquainted with the works of the famous chancellor Bacon. He was in some sort the precursor of Descartes and Gassendi. One may safely say, that he foretold that the ruin of scholastick impertinencies was at hand. He saw the imperfection of that philosophy, and was the first who pointed out the means of redressing it.*

A protestant of my acquaintance was saying to me the other day that Savonarola prepared the way for Luther, Calvin, and the other reformers, and that Bacon had done the same for the philosophers of our times. Fortune, said he, seems to take a pleasure in persecuting these precursors as you call them; Savonarola was hanged, and Bacon fined, and lost his office by judgment of the house of peers. The English value the moral essays of this author at a high rate. They have reason for so doing; these essays are indeed very good, but they are by no means equal in point of beauty or of delicacy, to the essays of Michael de Montaigne. As much as the physical and metaphysical philosophers of the English transcend the French Literati in the same kind; so great is the difference between the French scepticks and the English writers in that way. No

* He very fully proved, that the philosophy of Aristotle did not deserve to be preferred before the systems of other ancient authors; that it had been long hated and despised by the Greeks and other heathen nations, and never found admirers but in times of profound ignorance when the sciences were utterly neglected. *Quod vero putant homines in philosophia Aristotelis magnum utique consensum esse; cum post illam editam antiquorum philosophiae cessaverint et exoleverint; ast apud tempora, quæ sequita sunt, nil melius inventum fuerit; adeo ut illa tam bene posita et fundata videatur, ut utrumque tempus ad se traxerit: prius, quod de cessatione antiquarum philosophiarum, post Aristotelis opera edita homines cogitant id falsum est; du enim postea, usque ad tempora Ciceronis et secula sequentia manserunt opera veterum philosophorum. Sed temporibus inter sequentibus, ex inundatione barbarorum in imperium Romanum, perquam doctrina humana velut naufragium perpessa esset; tum demum philosophiæ Aristotelis et Platonis tanquam tabula ex materia leviora, et minus solida per fluctus temporum servatae sunt. Bacon Novum Organum Scientiarum, Lib. I. cap. LXXVII. p. 298.*

author of this country ever came up to Montaigne, much less to Bayle. I very much doubt whether they ever had a writer possessed of such a prodigious fund of erudition as that philosopher enjoyed, and who had the inimitable faculty of treating the most abstruse questions in so entertaining a manner, as to make them agreeable to men, the world, and even to ladies themselves.

You know, dear Isaac, that the English have no historian comparable to Titus Livius, to Tacitus, to Salust, to father Paul, to de Thou, or even to father Daniel. Is it not a surprizing thing that party-spirit should more strongly influence this whole nation than it does the Jesuits themselves? Of late years Burnet took it into his head to imitate de Thou, but we see plainly that he had it in his head only; for in point of exactness, method, and purity of stile, he comes not near him; not to speak of his partiality, with which all parties reproach him. They tell us, that in his first volume there are not above five or six characters, and his own is placed at the head of them all. This criticism however may be unjust, because it is possible the defect may not proceed from any malignity in the historian, but from the want of proper subjects for panegyrick. In a word, it would be a difficult thing to pick out of the English history any two reigns so corrupt and tyrannical, as those which he has painted out. However that be, this we know for certain, that a whig never keeps within bounds when he writes of a tory administration, and that the tories again are not a grain more modest, or more reasonable in their representations of the whigs.

The authority of English historians is on a level with those who wrote in France under the reigns of Charles the ninth, and Henry the third. And it would be a difficult thing ever to find in this country persons capable of writing what posterity may give an entire credit to. There seems to be

two causes for this. The first is the hatred of opposite parties; one part of the nation is at all times the sworn enemy of the other. The second is that presumption and good opinion which all the English writers have of themselves. They cannot find in their hearts to allow other nations any advantages which appear to them destructive of their own glory. If they disguise without scruple, and even falsify such facts as happen under their own eyes to serve their party-purposes, how much more ready must they be to misrepresent what happens abroad, when it does not suit them to tell the truth?

If the English have no good historians it is made up to them by their excellent poets. You are acquainted, dear Isaac, with the *Paradise Lost* of Milton. This poem has not only the beauties of the *Aeneid*, but I confess I like it much better than the *Gierusalemme Liberata* of Tasso; to me it seems that the English poet has made a much better use of religion than the Italian. I do not think that we can find either in Virgil or in Homer any thing more sublime than the portrait Milton has given us of the Deity, making war on the rebellious Angels. He says, the Almighty took his arms from Terror.

There is something very majestic in this idea, and if one dares to bring the Divinity like a hero into the field of battle, one cannot certainly give him a better squire than Terror, whom this bard assigns him.

Waller is a poet very far below Catullus, and yet very much superior to Voiture. His writings are gallant and full of beauties, but faint and languishing, at least sometimes; his verse having neither the brightness, nor the beauty of La Fontaine, at the same time that it wants the unnatural flights of Guarini. In short, he has not quite the merit of the French author, nor quite so many faults as the Italian.

Pope is without contradiction one of the greatest poets in the universe. One may, indeed one ought

ought to look upon him as a formidable rival to Boileau, Corneille, Racine, Virgil and Homer. This last author is perhaps more perfect in his English translation, than in the original. I cannot think that there is any thing in poetry more ingenious, more arch, and more gallant than his poem of the Rape of the Lock. The Lutrin of Boileau is a stronger and more manly piece, but it is very far from being so pleasant. They assure me in this country, that Pope was not above twenty years of age when he composed that charming poem. The noble description given us by Virgil of the employments of deceased heroes in the Elysian shades, does not surpass Pope's pleasant picture of the amusement of the ladies after their decease.

Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled,
That all her vanities at once are dead :
Succeeding vanities she still regards,
And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.
Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,
And love of Ombre, after death survive.
For when the fair in all their pride expire,
To their first elements the souls retire :
The sprites of fiery termagants in flame,
Mount up and take a Salamander's name.
Soft yielding minds to water glide away,
And sip, with nymphs, their elemental tea.
The graver prude sinks downwards to a gnome,
In search of mischief still on earth to roam.
The light coquettes in sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of air.

It must be acknowledged, dear Isaac, that it is simply impossible to conceive the reveries of the Cabalists better applied, than they are by him, in order to form a just and delicate critique on the fair sex.

All the different characters of women are exactly described in this account of their amusements

after death, and by a stroke familiar to great masters, the poet, tho' he supposes them dead, paints them so to the life, that nothing can be either more entertaining or more instructive.

The earl of Rochester hath written several satires in a stile as nervous and as beautiful as that of Boileau. He had indeed a strong and piercing wit, a brisk and lively imagination. He lived like Petronius, and died like La Fontaine. He piqu'd himself through the course of his life on maintaining the character of a free-thinker. Some time before he went out of the world, however, he thought fit to change his sentiments entirely. The fear of death, and the consequences that might attend it, astonished him. In his last moments he had recourse to a divine. But in order to save his reputation as a philosopher, he chose to capitulate rather than surrender at discretion. However, after some conferences with the doctor, he yielded, sign'd whatever was thought fit, and sacrificed even his dear philosophy, after all the pains he had taken to preserve it. He acknowledged all his errors, and a little after his decease Dr. Burnet published an account of his extraordinary conversion.

This, dear friend, is the ordinary custom of atheists. While they enjoy perfect health, they will not forsooth believe that there is a God, or at least they do their utmost not to believe it, because they imagine that ridding themselves of their belief, they may plunge with greater security into vice. But when they are ready to leave the world, their false philosophy vanishes, and they throw themselves into the arms of those who offer their assistance to dispel the horrors of their hearts. They become then as submissive, as before they were incredulous. There is scarce any thing of which they may not be persuaded in these their last hours. They take on trust whatever is said unto them, resume all the prejudices of which they fancied themselves cured for ever; witness those weak creatures who have order-

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ed themselves to be cloathed in the habits of monks, and directed that they should be so interred.

It is not reason, it is fear and terror that makes a man make such a change as this on the verge of life. To be convinced of this, one need only reflect on the constant custom of these persons, which is to die in the religion in which they were born. If their conversions were fruits of conviction, they would in this case act as others do in their full health, who often see cause to alter their religious opinions, and to live in another faith than that which they received in their childhood: With how much justice then, dear Isaac, may we despise a man who all his life long refuses to acknowledge the most evident truths, and on a sick bed condescends to resume the most ridiculous prejudices?

Besides the poets of whom I have been speaking, there have been many others who deserve the esteem of men of parts. The English are by no means deficient in dramatick poets. I shall very speedily give you my thoughts on their theatre.

It is not at all surprizing that poetry hath been carried such a length in this nation. Men of the first quality have not disdained to become followers of the muses. My lord Roscommon, the duke of Buckinghamshire, the earl of Dorset, and many other persons of an elevated rank have written pieces which give them, with justice, the title of great poets. These examples have excited the envy and ambition of private men, every body naturally imitates the grandees of his country, and it is the happiness of the English to have always amongst them men of quality of distinguished merit, passionately fond of glory and the Belles Lettres. To be in the mode here, there is no necessity of learning ridiculous grimaces, and an affected laugh, or a contemptuous disregard for the sciences, since whoever would pretend to treat as pedants all such as devote themselves to learning and to books, would be thought dull stupid creatures,

tures, and become as ridiculous as they would endeavour to make others.

Before I finish this letter, I must take notice of one of those amiable wonders, one of those pleasing prodigies, with which once in twenty ages, providence is pleased to amaze mankind. This phænomenon so favourable to England and the sciences, is the present Queen consort. This princess is not only free from all the foibles of her sex, but is also unblemished with any of those slight failings which we discern in the greatest men. She is a heroine, but a philosophick heroine. Her grandeur hinders not her having all the kindness, tenderness, and affability that can be wished, neither do the necessary cares of a crown prevent her cultivating and protecting the sciences. Her liberalities are constantly afforded to the unhappy, but of the unfortunate learned she is particularly tender.

It must appear surprizing to you, Isaac, that so many talents, and so great virtues, should centre in one person ; be assured however, that all the praises I bestow, are much inferior to what that princess deserves. You know that the lustre of a throne is not apt to dazzle me. My philosophic eyes can through that splendor discern the truth, which when I cannot divulge with honour, I keep a profound silence. I leave to the writers of dedications the trade of praising the great to an extravagant degree, in order to acquire some very moderate pension. I am willing to grant the same indulgence to a poet ; the muses have for a long time prostituted their praises, they may now do it by prescription. How many tyrants, how many drivellers, how many illustrious good-for-nothings have they commended ? But never can I admit, that a philosopher should debase himself so far as to betray the truth, and offer incense to an idol, the worthlessness of which he knows.

Farewel, dear Isaac, live content and happy, and write me an answer some time or other.

L E T T E R

LETTER CXLI.

The ceremonies used by the English with regard to deceased persons.—Description of their funerals.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

London.—

THE English have certain customs, dear Isaac, which appear to me as idle as any that I have observed amongst other nations. I was invited the other day to assist at the funeral of a citizen, and I confess to you that I found it almost impossible to penetrate into the reason of their ceremonies, which seemed to me as extraordinary as those I had observed at Paris on the like occasion.

As soon as a man expires in this country, they strip him with all imaginable care of every thing made of linen. A Mohammedan is not more careful in washing a dead body, a Jew in closing its issues, or a papist in muttering his superstitious prayers over it, than the English are in putting on a woollen shroud. There are a great number of these sort of vestures always to be had ready made, great numbers of people gaining their livelihood thereby. It is forbidden to use about a dead body any material which is not of woollen; and if even cotton, or flaxen or thread be employed, it is considered a crime against the state. I was exceedingly surprized, when I first heard of this custom, but when I came to understand the reason of it, I was very far from condemning the English. The intention of the law which forbids burying in linen, is to encourage the consumption of woollen goods. I must confess, that it is scarce possible to carry a concern for trade farther, than to make the very dead interest themselves in it. This without doubt, is a home push; and if the rest of their funeral customs

customs were as well founded, I should not pretend to criticise them, but should as readily approve them as soon as I understood their causes. But there are many, of which they do not only find themselves at a loss to assign the reason, but also freely admit that they scarce know any end that they have.

When a dead man has been attended by his woollen valet de chambre, and is equipt with a fine or a coarse suit according to his degree; for the christians, you know carry their vanity even to their graves; they leave him for two or three days in the middle of his apartment, to give him time to come to life again if he shall so please. I cannot attribute to any other cause this custom of keeping a dead body two or three weeks, sometimes till it be putrified. If this be the true reason of the custom, then I am persuaded that the heads of families first brought it up, and that their children had no share therein. For many of them would to my knowledge look not a little out of humour, if from time to time some of these dead folks should take it into their heads to live again, and in consequence thereof quit their shrouds.

It appears to me dear, Isaac, that notwithstanding these precautions, for fear any such should be buried alive, people are notwithstanding easier on the article of the loss of their relations than in any other. When the deceased has shewn an obstinate resolution to remain where he is, they nail him up in his coffin, and when this is carried to the grave, it is covered with a large black pall bordered with white. This covering is so wide, that six men can stand underneath it, without either discovering themselves, or any part of the coffin's being exposed to view; these christians of the reformed religion pretend hereby to do honour to the dead. I should have easily guessed this, if I had not been told it, having observed that all the European nations, except the Turks, take a great pride in seeing certain pieces of stuff or silk borne

up by persons appointed for that purpose. This we see in respect to the robes of kings and other sovereign princes. Counsellors of parliament at Paris have likewise train-bearers, and so have priests in their processions. But women are sollicitous above all in this respect, and as if their honour lay chiefly in their tails, when they are of a certain rank, expect to have them borne up after them. Surely, Isaac, there is something very pleasant in this. But to return to the English funerals.

The coffin, thus covered with its sable veil, is preceded by a certain number of dismal-looking fellows, who look like so many serjeants, each with a black staff in his hand tipped with silver; next march the parsons, with a slow and solemn motion; the relations of the deceased close the procession, and now and then appear extremely sorrowful. At length the body comes to the church, there it is set down for a while. In the mean time there is a sermon preached, in which the praises of the dead person are not forgotten. They likewise take this opportunity of receiving certain fees on account of the permission of the corpse's entering the church with the black pall or covering before mentioned. Each parish has three, of different prices. The English churchmen, tho' they no longer talk of the fire of purgatory, keep up however a good many money-getting ceremonies in funerals, and have only changed the Romish prayers for the dead into very harmless compliments on their memory. In this respect, I cannot but commend their decency and candor. They don't think it proper to take church dues, without returning some way or other church favours.

When the corpse is interr'd, the people return in the same order to the house; there they give them wine, white and red, and sometimes burnt with spices; every one takes a little to comfort him for the loss of his friend, and the women drink a glass or two in order to keep up their spirits.

I find

I find these customs altogether as ridiculous as those of the papists, tho' I confess they are a little more cheerful. Instead of doleful lamentable psalms, they content themselves with a short sermon; and in the room of the popish holy water, these churchmen have wisely brought in a glass of wine for themselves. One may well enough compare the popish burials to the ceremonies of magicians employed in calling up departed shades; whereas those of the church of England differ nothing from the feasts of people in good humour, compliments and good cheer are here united; and in comparing folly with folly, I must own that which entertains is much more excusable than that which afflicts me.

People of distinction in this country are buried in the same manner as at Paris; they are carried in a hearse attended by several coaches full of mourners and friends. In this manner they are conducted to the churches, and placed in the vaults belonging to their respective families.

I must own, my friend, that I am exceedingly astonished, on considering the ceremonies used by the churchmen in this country, at their exclaiming so loudly at the papists. They are less exempt than the fancy from those reproaches which they bestow so liberally upon others. In my opinion, the presbyterians are in less danger of being retorted upon in this respect; their ceremonies are fewer and more simple, which renders them less shocking in the eyes of the philosopher. Give me leave for a moment to suppose myself a papist. "I will undertake, says I to a churchman, to prove that you have customs of as extraordinary a nature as ours, and that the thing with which you most reproach us, and which in fact never did happen amongst us, hath fallen out frequently amongst you. How often have your doctors, and your historians, nay, and even your poets, made themselves merry at our expence on pope Joan. "How happy, say you, was the church when under this female president? A pleasant succession! Would not the apostle say, "think

" think you, look down from heaven with amazement at the sight of a woman in his chair? What could the people say when she was brought to bed of a little popeling in a publick place?" These pleasantries, however, belong more properly to the English church than to the Roman, as I will undertake to prove. For take which side you will: Suppose that, with the learned of these times, you give up the story as a forgery, and acknowledge that there never was such a thing as a female pope; you must then grant, that the clamours made on this subject are very ill founded; and you must likewise allow, that this is a shrewd sign of your readiness to charge us with things of which we never were guilty. On the other hand, if you persist in believing that this tale of a female pope is really no fiction, I will then undertake to prove to you on your own principles, that this could not possibly bring any dishonour on the church, since what, according to your own account, hath but once happened amongst us, has been however frequent enough amongst you. The sovereign is constantly allowed to be the head of the church in England: What think you then during the reigns of Elizabeth and Anne? Had you not then female popes? You can't deny the matter of fact, which exposes you to these pleasantries? Did not the marshal de Biron boast that he had seen the head of the church in England dance. I know very well, that your authors stoutly dispute this point, maintaining positively that this princess did no more than play on the harpsichord. Be that as it will, you must admit that she might have danced, if she had so pleased; nay, she might have gone farther, and imitated Pope Joan in all things. Let me ask you then; Would you have thought the worse of your religion for such an accident? Without doubt you would answer, that the failings of a particular person cannot prejudice any church. I also, on my part, judge the same thing, and I defy you to find a reply; we which way you will, I shall always have it in power to recriminate. But, say you, when our

queens happen to be at the head of our religion, it is a mere accident; they enjoy an empty title, and perform none of the functions. Now this is what I absolutely deny, for they have a direct authority over the clergy, and in quality of heads of the church perform all that any other heads of the church do at any other time. Before you can rid yourself of this objection, you must shew how kings are heads of the church, and wherein the difference lies between their exercise of that office, and the manner in which it is discharged when you have a queen regent.

When the provinces of Zealand and Holland offered by their ambassadors to acknowledge queen Elizabeth for their sovereign, she rejected that offer, and told them withal, that they were in the wrong to revolt about so small a matter as the mass. If you won't assist thereat, said she, as a ceremony of the church, go to it as to a play. Suppose I took it into my head to act such a scene before you, would you run away? I know you would not, but stand still and look on. You see I am in a manner ready, for I am dress'd in a white robe, and that is one of the main things in the business.

Do you believe that a queen who was so well versed in a ceremonial of another church, as to have been able to have gone through it in case of need, should be at all at a loss about the rites of her own church, of which she was the head, or at all dubious of her right of performing them, if she had so thought fit. For my part, I believe that if Elizabeth had taken it into her head to preach, none of her subjects would have had any pretence to censure her sermons. This Sir, is my way of talking to English churchmen."

Consider, dear Isaac, that different sects attack each other in the weakest parts, without considering whether they are not guilty themselves of the same faults which they impute to their adversaries. The presbyterians indeed may be allowed to throw poor Joan in the dish of the papists, because they stand no fear of a recrimination. The church in this country seems to be the mean between that of Rome, and the conventicle of Geneva. The members of the

commonweal-

communion have not so many ceremonies as the former, neither have they the simplicity of the latter; they seem to be afraid of doing too much on one side, or of doing too little on the other.

Farewell, dear Isaac, live content and happy.

LETTER. CXLII.

The method of executing criminals described.—Their general behaviour at the place of execution, is with a ridiculous hardiness.—The English blamed for not discountenancing such a monstrous affection of bravery at such a time.—Story of a French soldier.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

London—

A Very melancholy affair, my dear Isaac, of which I was unluckily a spectator a few days ago, compels me to make some serious reflections on the force of prejudice, since I am convinced how far wrong notions and a false love of glory can carry men.

One of my friends propos'd to me going to see a very pleasant sight: I ask'd him very seriously whether there was any thing in it curious. There cannot, answered he, be any thing more entertaining, and besides, there are excellent rope-dancers. The gravity with which my friend spoke, sufficiently persuad'd me that I should have no reason to be displeas'd with the sight, and therefore I readily came into his proposal. I followed my conductor, and at a small distance from London, we fell upon a great road where there was an infinite number of spectators assembled in a groupe. But judge, dear Isaac, at my surprize, when looking about me I saw a gibbet, and twenty highway-men and other malefactors on the point of being executed. I cannot say that I saw both at the same time, for the latter were not yet come,

come, but the people spoke of their coming with a high air of satisfaction. How! said I to my friend, What, is this the charming spectacle of which you spoke to me! Be quiet, said he, you will have all the reason in the world to be satisfied, the play will presently begin, they only wait for the actors, who are upon the road.

While my friend was a speaking I heard a prodigious noise; I turned my head and saw a cart, and in it several people, some of whom were well dress'd. Ay! Ay! cried my friend, I see by the looks of the gentlemen that you will be well enough pleased with this scene. Why return'd I, what are these people? and what do they come here for? Come here, for, return'd he, laughing, why these people are to perform the principal parts. I then began to consider with attention the people in the cart, who as they pass'd near me appeared, notwithstanding they were so well dressed, to have each a cord about his neck, with which a moment after he was to be tied up. I was going to ask my friend some questions about the dress of these people, which I thought pretty extraordinary, and at the same ill chosen; but I was prevented by the harangue of one of the highwaymen: He cough'd, he spit, looked about him, as unconcernedly as if he had been a spectator; next he pulled off a pair of white gloves and put them up in his pocket, and then addressing himself to the crowd, he told them, that God permitted him to come to that end for playing at cards on Sundays; had it not been for this crime, he fancied, it seems, that he should never have been discovered, but have gone on quietly and methodically in the way of his profession.

While the gentleman was making his speech, another of his companions practised a thousand whimsical grimaces, and said from time to time twenty droll things in order to make the spectators smile. If I had not been informed how this comedy was to end, I should certainly have fancied I had been present at a mountebank's stage. Our highwayman orator spoke pretty much with the air of one of these itinerant doctors

doctors when he is distributing his packets ; and the other fellow, who contented himself with lesser motions and a sort of dumb shew, resembled pretty strongly a pierot or jack-pudding. As I was looking very attentively upon these unhappy creatures, in order to discover whether this false bravery with which they mimick heroism in their last moments would really hold out, the hangman, who had already fasten'd the ropes to the gallows, gave the horses a stroke with his whip, and the cart sliding away, the actors remained pendant in the air, where they made a very odd figure. Immediately upon this a great number of people ran to put them out of their pain. Some pulled them by the legs, others struck them with their fists upon the stomach, and by the ease and coolness with which they did this, I perceiv'd that the English were far enough from that delicacy which inspires other people on such occasions, and fills them with a horror for such as by their crimes have brought themselves to a violent death.

As soon as I had lost sight of this dismal spectacle, I could not help thinking of that insensibility with which those whom I just now censured suffered, and concerning which I took occasion to question my friend : " Pray, said I, what could be the cause that these two highwaymen put on an air of intrepidity, unaffected by any of their companions in death ? " The reason, returned my friend, was, because they had an inclination to die as they had liv'd, and to leave behind them the character of men of spirit. In other countries when a criminal is condemn'd, his head is presently taken up with the importance of his voyage, and his conscience, forsooth, claims all his attention. Here it is quite another thing, a man of courage who hopes to wipe off a part of the shame by his manner of sustaining his punishment, has other thoughts in his head. He takes care to get himself shav'd, powder'd, and well dress'd, and then this dress again is in part, to have the air of a wedding, and part that of a funeral. He likewise equips himself

with such a speech as you heard the man make just now, of which he gives a copy to a person who consoles him in his last moments, by giving him solemn assurances of seeing it printed and published."

"How! cry'd I, struck with astonishment at what my friend had told me, is it possible that all the sad stuff I heard that fellow say should be printed and laid before the world? I shall be no longer astonished that malefactors die here like beasts, without shewing any marks of concern for the flagrant villanies they have committed, or like fools trifle away their last moments in playing antick tricks to divert a mob. Is it permitted amongst a people who pique themselves so much on their reflection and good-sense, that publick executions should be thus in a manner burlesqued, the necessary consequence of which must be the encouraging all those crimes that are most dangerous for the publick? The fear of shame is as strong in a human soul, as the fear of punishment. How many people would risque their lives to rescue themselves from want, if the fear of exposing their families to everlasting infamy did not withhold them! Yet in this country, it is not only thought an act of injustice to reflect on the family of a criminal, but it is likewise thought reasonable to abate as much as is possible the shame of his execution. Whatever he has done in his life, a malefactor may acquire the esteem of this nation at his death, provided he behaves then like a beast or a madman. Considering this, I am really amazed there are not in England many more thieves of all stamps than there are. Sure I am, that all imaginable pains is taken to encrease their number. Its true they are punish'd, but provided they die intrepid, this punishment carries along with it very little shame. If a fellow dies boldly and with spirit, his memory, instead of being abhorred, is cherished and the press is employed to transinit an account of his bravery to posterity."

If instead of applauding a malefactor's stupid harangue, who is impudent enough to make a jest of

his suffering, his behaviour was treated with a proper contempt, and his ill-placed intrepidity received the resentment it deserved, by an appearance of double indignation in the spectator, men capable of bad practices would be abashed at the consideration of their consequences; and the fear of the infamy attending them would affright them more, than the fear of that violent death to which they are exposed, the horror of which is greatly abated by the applause they expect from the resolution with which they die. It is really with me a question who is least in his wits, the man who applauds a hardened criminal, or the criminal who fancies he can efface his guilt by shewing no concern about it.

All these arguments, dear Isaac, made no impression upon my friend; so far from it, that he pretended to defend this crying abuse founded only on ridiculous prejudices, and flattered himself that he had fully excused it, by attributing it to the natural intrepidity of the English, and the contempt they have for death. “It is, said I, for that very reason, that the people of this country should have other motives to restrain them; when taking away their lives will not terrify folks, must you not have recourse to other methods to deter them from doing mischief? It might be allowable amongst nations where the fear of death terrifies beyond description, to abate something of shame in their executions, because in other respects they have force enough to produce the effects which are looked for from them; but amongst you English, how is it possible to keep you to your duty?” This was received just as my former discourse had been. My friend contented himself with laughing in my face, and I must own that as to this head, the English are very odd sort of people.

I dare say, dear Isaac, you will be no less shock'd than I, at this ridiculous practice of extenuating in such a manner the infamy which such wretches deserve who perish by the halter, and that you will readily admit that the prejudices of some polite nations

ons are frequently as ridiculous as those of untaught savages. Every man who will make use of his reason, will easily discern that it is a thing more excusable to push to extremity the severity with which such men are treated, as bring themselves to suffer ignominious deaths, than by pitying them to hurt society. All imaginable pains should be taken to find out means of striking such people with terror, and this more especially as they pretend to despise death. The duke de Vendosme, during the last war in Italy, caused a great number of banditti and assassins to be hang'd up, but without being able to put an end to such disorders; which, on the contrary, continued as frequent as ever, the most horrid murders being committed every week, either on account of jealousy, or private piques. At length, however, the duke fell upon a remedy unthought of before; he took hold of the Italian superstition, and gave orders, that no assassin should for the future be allowed a confessor, in order to settle his conscience before death. This had the desired effect, for it terrified those miscreants infinitely more than the fear of death. The risque of being hang'd was nothing; but to be hang'd without confession was a chance they could not be brought to stand.

When I was at Paris, the chevalier de Maisin told me a story of a soldier who was condemned to be shot, and who absolutely refused to have any thing to do with the priests. All imaginable pains were taken to convince him of the folly and wickedness of such a behaviour, but in vain, he remained firm to the very hour of his execution, notwithstanding all the representations of his becoming the prey of devils, and of his suffering the most intolerable torments to all eternity when he came to die. In this sullen disposition he was led out; but as he went along, he took it into his head to ask what they would do with his body? To which it was answered, that it would be thrown into the common sewer. "How! said he, shan't I be buried in holy ground? No, reply'd the priest,

priest, since you are determined not to die like a christain, we see no reason why you should fare like a christian after death." The thoughts of not being interred in a church-yard, did more with this fellow than the fear of damnation. He thought nothing of his soul's lying eternally in hell; but he could not bear that his body should be thrown into a common sewer.

Behold, my dear Isaac, an evident proof of the effects which shame and a sense of infamy will produce, even in the minds of the most hardned men. There will always remain, even among such creatures as these, such a portion of self-love, as will make them extremely sensible of any expressions of horror towards them. For this reason I am persuaded that it is so far from being unjust, that it is in truth a thing useful to society, to keep up a sort of shyness towards such families as have had any of their branches cut off by the hands of the common hangman. Throwing an indelible blemish upon those who are most dear to a man, is a curb that will restrain some dispositions untractable by other means; and experience will shew, that such as are no way sensible of the fear of death, retain yet a dread of covering with perpetual infamy a father, a mother, wife and children.

I know very well, that this maxim will appear contrary to equity, inasmuch as it renders innocent people obnoxious to those punishments which only the guilty have deserved. But then we must remember, that it is simply impossible even the wisest laws should prove beneficial to all the world. All that can be expected is, that they should turn to the benefit of the greatest part of them. This is the sentiment of a very great philosopher, who in order to prove the justice of the Roman laws against insolvent debtors, maintains, that it is better a small number of people should run the hazard of losing the benefit of a just excuse, than that the whole world should

be

be left at liberty to look out specious pretexts for not paying their just debts*.

Fare thee well, dear Isaac, live content, and may it thou be happy in all thy affairs.

LETTER CXLIII.

The impious absurdity of believing that the Supreme Being makes a certain number of souls unhappy, merely to afford happiness to others.—The merit of some eminent writers of the Jewish religion, considered.—Onis's reasons for rejecting the Talmud.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo—

THE Letters you have written me, dear Moncea, and wherein you speak so freely of the men of letters in England, have induced me to reflect a little on the great men our nation has produced, and who are utterly unknown but to the small circle of the learned. The Nazarenes in general believe, that our brethren are plunged in the grossest ignorance, and that obstinacy is the sole support of our religion. Some of their doctors have gone yet farther, and have taught a most extraordinary doctrine incompatible with any sound notions, even of the Divine Being. They say, that he permits the Israelites to remain in the state they are, that their persisting in their faith, may serve as a proof of that of the Nazarenes. Is it possible to advance any thing more apparently false? For let us suppose for a moment, that the Jewish religion were false, would it not still be ridiculous to suppose, that God damns a certain number of creatures merely to afford the means of salvation to others? As if it were necessary for him

* Satius enim erat a paucis etiam justum accusationem non accipi, quam ab omnibus aliquam tentari. Seneca de Beneficiis lib. vii. cap. 16.

to make use of so cruel a stratagem to oblige some people to stick to their belief. The vanity of the Nazarenes glares excessively, in their pretending to defend such an opinion as this; they think it not enough, it seems, to treat us upon all occasions with sovereign contempt, but they would also make God participate with them in this sort of usage, without reflecting that such a manner of acting is repugnant to his essence. We need not be astonish'd dear Monceca, at the pride of some philosophers, who would persuade us, that the universe is made for man alone; and that so many worlds, exceeding in size that which we inhabit, so many suns, larger and brighter than that which enlightens our system, are scattered through the boundless expanse, merely to entertain the sight of one of us worms upon the earth. How absurd soever this opinion may be, it is still less so, than to believe that God makes one soul everlastinglly miserable, that to another he may facilitate the means of becoming eternally happy.

Visions of this stamp are so ridiculous, that there is nothing difficult in exposing them even to people of very moderate abilities. But the Nazarene divines are by no means for allowing us the liberty of refuting their errors. When one of our learned men writes a book in our defence, our adversaries are not only forbid the reading of it, but in certain countries they push this severity so far as to hinder even our selves from reaping the benefit of such instructions. In Italy, the Jews are forbid to have in their custody the commentaries of Abarbinel on the minor prophets. You know as well as I do, dear Monceca, how excellent a book that is, and that the more our enemies condemn it, the more they represent it as dangerous, the more, with respect to us they commend and applaud it. The jealousy and tyranny of their priests hath not stopp'd at this single prohibition; many of their doctors have written, that it would be both useful and necessary to prohibit all the books of Abarbinel to the Jews, because they are capable of confirming us in our sentiments

sentiments. Is it not, Moncea, a pleasant way of refuting a book to suppress it? What judgment do they think, I will not say the learned, but even the middle sort of people, who use their understandings, will pass on such a conduct?

The Nazarenes have indeed reason to fear the spirit and the learning of Abarbinel: that illustrious Rabbin was equal even to our famous Maimonides. What spleen foever our enemies have shewn against his writings, they acknowledge, however, that where his interpretations have nothing to do between them and their controversies with the Jews, he is sublime, judicious, perspicuous, and full of candor. Can we expect any more? ought we to hope they will overturn their own objections?

The merit of Abarbinel was so great, that it overcame the prejudices of many of the Nazarenes, insomuch that after his death, many Venetian noblemen did not disdain to attend his funeral, which was celebrated by the principal Jews of Padua. It was in a church-yard of that famous city that this famous Jew was buried, and sometime after, they interred Juda Mentz in the same place. This Rabbi was also an illustrious man. He died rector of the academy of Padua. All persons of letters agree, that he had a brisk and lively imagination, and that he spoke and wrote with great facility. But, however, he had not either the knowledge of Menassah Ben Israel, or the profound erudition of Solomon Ben Virga. The conciliator of the first mentioned Rabbi, is an excellent work, and the history of the Jews composed by the latter, is a piece worthy of the highest esteem.

Abraham de Balmis deserves a distinguished rank among the learned of our nation. That illustrious physician who was an excellent grammarian, and an excellent philosopher, composed a book of the utmost use of the means of acquiring the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue. * A christian critique did

* Abraham de Balmis nihil aliud agere mihi visus est quam veterum doctrinam perpetuo convellere atque impugnare, magis not.

not however spare this great man. As he had too much candor to decide hastily upon things which seemed to him to lie beyond the reach of human capacity, and as he chose to examine things to the bottom before he admitted them to be absolutely certain, they charged him with a design of destroying all systems, without intending to erect any thing in their stead. Thus because he was not rash and over-bearing, they would needs have him a septick.

The Nazarenes are so given to search out whatever may tarnish the reputation of our authors, that they seldom spare any. They seem especially to bend their attacks against those who have most merit. You know, my dear Moncea, that it is to the illustrious Akiba we stand indebted for all that is either true or reasonable in respect to the Oral Law; and tho' I am a Caraite, yet I must frankly own, that if nothing had been added to the writings of this great man, all that he says with respect to the written law, ought to be received among all the different sects of Jews. However, the merit of Akiba is far from standing unimpeached by the Nazarene doctors: They represent him as a crafty fellow, a cheat and an impostor. Such are the appellations they bestow on a Rabbi, who by his candor and knowledge, merits, that all true Israelites should agree in giving him the title of Sethumataah, or, the Authentick.

It must, however, be confessed, my dear Moncea, that if all the books which the Jews attribute to Akiba were really and truly his, the Nazarenes would have abundant reason to reject them, as full of lies and fables. In this respect they would only follow the example of the Caraites. For I must do so much justice to the skill and merit of that Rabbi, as to stand persuaded, that all the reveries of the Talmud, did not flow from him, as from their

infestando occupatus, quam in docendo, at in dubium tantum vocare prisorum præceptiones; cum interim nihil certi statuat, non dicere est, sed ridere. Munsterus in præfatione grammatices pud Spizelii Felicem literatum. p. 918.

source, nor were originally collected from his writings. It is very true, that Akiba was the first compiler of the Deuteroses, or Jewish traditions, and that he drew together and digested into one work, what Hillel, Simeon, and other doctors had written in different treatises; but that learned Rabbi was far from collecting all the extravagances which we now see in the Talmud. It was such who afterwards laboured in that work who invented them, or at least had the weakness to transmit them to posterity. Even the most zealous partizans of the Talmud are compelled to own, that Akiba was dead before Rabbi Judah composed the Misna or Talmud of Jerusalem; they pretend that this last mentioned Rabbi was born the very day the other died: but sure it is without all foundation, that after having reported this, that they break out thus, when one sun was eclipsed, another appeared in the horizon. I protest, dear Monceca, a man must be prejudiced to a high degree, who can see any thing like an equality between these Jews; and I must own to you, that even at the time that I had no thoughts of becoming a Caraite, I always looked on the one as a man of learning of the first class[†], and one the other as an author of a very suspicious authority. Heaven has at length been pleased to remove the clouds which hindred my sight, and I now clearly distinguish the folly of those pretended traditions, for which reason I reject them. But before I took this step, I was resolved to examine thoroughly into the matter, that I might avoid doing that hastily which I might repent at leisure. I am therefore pretty positive that I had good grounds for rejecting the Talmud and all its dreams. At least, I flatter myself, that I omitted nothing in my power,

* R. Juda princeps natus est illo die quo obiit R. Akiba, quo aiunt sol exortus est, & sol occidit. Pezron, Defence of the Antiquities of Times, p. 76.

† Hujus nonae (inquit auctor libri Zemach David) exiit uno extremo mundi usque ad aliud, atque totam legem orat ex ejus ore accipimus. Konig. Bibliotheca vetus & nova, p. 11

order to discover and come at the truth, and if I have been deceived, I trust that the Deity, who knows my good intentions, will have mercy upon me; for it appears absolutely impossible that he should have given any authority for the puerile observations dictated by our Rabbies. Can it be believed, that he would ever descend into a tale of the necessities to which we are subjected by the structure of our bodies? Is it not a most astonishing folly, to place among the number of religious ceremonies our manner of easing of nature? However, some of our Rabbies have not been ashamed to write very copiously upon this subject. In the first place, they have settled the points of the compass towards which these sort of conveniences should be turned, and these are the North and South. Next it is settled, that we are not to remove our garments but in a fitting posture; this is the second rule. And the third is, that in all affairs of this nature we use the left, and not the right hand, which would be a grievous offence; such, according to these Rabbins, are the sacred mysteries of the law, which are not to be dispensed with; and to give greater weight to these impertinencies, they are inserted in the writings of Akiba, whom they have made the author of these ridiculous precepts, which doubtless he never thought of. For it is impossible to believe that a man so truly learned as he was, should have run into such low and pitiful absurdities; but they were glad, no doubt, to lay hold of so venerable a name as his, in order give a sanction to their chimeras*.

The rabbies, dear Moncea, have done as much mischief to the Jewish religion by their imperti-

* Dixit Akiba, ingressus sum aliquando post Rabbi Josuam in sedis secretae locum & tria didici. Didici I. quod non versus orientem & occidentem, sed versus septentrionem & austrum, convertere nos debemus. Didici II. quod non in pedes erectum, sed jam confidentem, se retegere lipeat. Didici III. quod Podex non dextra sed sinistra manu abstergendus sit ... Legis hæc Arcana sunt. Barajetha, in Massech. Beruchot. fol. 62.

nencies, as the christian monks have to theirs, by their deplorable and sometimes ridiculous superstitions. The silly works both of the one and the other, have prejudiced but too many people against all the books in general, which treat of both religions. They are so much scandalized at the follies which they see not only tolerated, but approved and commended, that they cannot persuade themselves that there can be found any sensible writers in those communions, wherein some members receive as useful and necessary rules, such follies and extravagancies as are scarce pardonable in ideots.

Thus, on account of a prejudice fatal to the learned amongst us, the Nazarenes will not be brought to distinguish between our rabbies, but condemn them in the lump. In the very same manner the protestants despise many excellent works written by catholick divines, but sure with very little reason. For instance, they slight the moral essays of M. Nicolle, the sermons of Bourdaloue, and many others, because they judge of all their books of piety by the Legend of St. Francis, the life of Mary Alacoque, the works of the monk Cæsarius, those of the Jesuits Outerman and Gazeus, the Mystical City of God, by Mary d'Agreda, and such like. On the other hand, it must be allowed, that there are very few papists who will be at the pains of distinguishing between the learned and judicious protestants, and those visionaries who wait for the accomplishment of the pretended prophecies of Jurieu or such like rhapsodies. Such are the unhappy effects of that prejudice which weak and wicked writers beget in others against the religion they profess.

Farewel, dear Moncea, live easy and contented, and mayst thou be always prosperous.

LETTER CXLIV.

The tenets held by the Samaritan Jews.—Luther attacked for writing disrespectfully of the general epistle of St. James.—A common thing for disputants in religion to wrest passages of scripture, to serve particular purposes.—Commentaries on sacred writings, considered as useless and blameable.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo—

I HAVE within these few days, my dear Moncea, contracted an acquaintance with a Samaritan Jew. He has set me right as to abundance of things, of which till now I had but very confused ideas. I looked upon the Samaritans in general as hereticks plunged in an abyf of errors, I believed that none of their ceremonies did at all resemble those of the ancient Israelites; nay, I would scarce admit that their former worship had any thing in common with that of the Jews. These prejudices of mine are entirely dissipated, and I am thoroughly satisfied that I have been in an error.

Of all the Jewish sects, the Samaritans differ least in their customs from those of our ancestors. Most of these people live at Gaza, Damascus, Cairo, but principally at Sichem, now called Neapolis. They offer sacrifices upon Mount Gerizim, affirming positively that this is the chosen place of the Lord. They not only cite, in defence of this their opinion, a passage of their Pentateuch *, which they charge our ancestors with corrupting, by putting Mount Hebal, whence the curses were to be pronounced, for Mount Gerizim, whence the bleslings were to be derived. But they insist also on prescription, on the uninterrupted succession of their

* Deuteron. xxvii. 4.

high-priests, on tradition, on history, and † on the tacit confession of the author of the christian law, who did not dispute or deny the truth of what the Samaritan woman alledged, that their fathers worshipped on Mount Gerizim ‡. This reproach of corruption, which our ancestors threw by wholesale on this poor people, has been adopted by certain learned men among the Nazarenes, without reflecting that the establishing this proposition as a truth, would be equally prejudicial to them and to us. As I am fully persuaded of this, I should be glad, after reading my letter, if you would give me your thoughts upon the matter.

The Samaritan from whom I learned all these particulars, assured me, that their priests are to this day of the race of Aaron; and that they never intermarry out of that family, that they may not lose the honour of their descent. He tells us likewise, that the altar on which they sacrificed, is the very same which was built by the Israelites immediately after their passage over Jordan. I must own to you, dear Moncea, that I can scarce give credit to the antiquity and authenticity of these stories; but rather think it a tale fit to be inserted among the fabulous collections of the rabbies. If indeed any thing could give it weight, it must be that wonderful care and industry with which the Samaritans have always preserved the customs of their ancestors, and whatever came down to them with the venerable stamp of antiquity. They yet keep up and make use of the ancient Hebrew characters, which differ much from those that are in use with us, and which were the invention of Esdras, after the return from the Babylonish captivity.

You will easily apprehend, my dear Moncea, that people so much attached as the Samaritans are to the customs of our earliest ancestors, are fa-

† Joseph. Antiq. lib. iv. cap. ult. & lib. xiii. cap. 6.
‡ John iv. 21, 22.

enough from admitting as rules of faith, all the reveries of the Talmud. Far from adopting the sentiments of the rabbies, they go yet farther than the Caraïtes, and acknowledge no scriptures but the first books of Moses, looking on the rest of the sacred code, as written by pious men under the immediate direction of Heaven, but yet of no decisive authority with respect to matters of faith. It is easy to perceive that the Samaritans run into a gross error in this respect: For since they admit that these books were really written by the persons whose names they bear, and that their authors were pious men, influenced by the spirit of God, why should they hesitate at admitting the authority of the books themselves? If it could once be made out to the Caraïtes, that those who composed the Talmud were persons of wisdom and learning, they would receive it without delay; much more if it could be made appear, that the rabbies by whom it was composed were enlightened by the spirit of God.

It is necessary, dear Moncea, when one would avoid giving a blind obedience to whatever is contained in a book, to alledge that its author was a mere man and uninspired. For when once it is admitted that a book was written by inspiration, absolute submission is due thereto. It is ridiculous to attempt to range in different classes, such pieces as have fallen from the pens of inspired men. For we cannot believe that men are more or less inspired, or that whatever they receive by inspiration ought to be received with any different degree of credit.

A famous German divine went very near asserting this erroneous opinion*. In the heat of a dispute, he advanced a proposition with which his adversaries for ever after reproached him. He affirmed, that a certain work, written by an ancient divine, whom the Nazarenes suppose to be one of

* Luther.

their apostles, was low, poor, and little better than chaff, in comparison of the writings of other doctors †. His enemies did not fail to attack him vigorously on his maintaining so evident a falsehood. In the end he was obliged to acknowledge his error ; and at this day the most zealous of his disciples readily admit that he committed a very great fault, in endeavouring to establish a sentiment, so directly opposite to reason *. This divine, in order to deliver himself from some difficulties, durst not deny the credit of the book which made against him ; but then he diminished it as much as he could, and made it much inferior to another book which appeared to favour his own sentiments.

Strange is the effect of that blind prejudice into which even the greatest men are apt to fall, through an over-hasty desire of supporting whatever they advance ! Is it possible to find out a greater absurdity than this of distinguishing degrees of wisdom in the spirit of God ? Or can there be any thing more opposite to common sense than this notion, of giving more or less credit to divinely-inspired writings, as they agree more or less with our own opinions ?

I know, my dear Monceca, that the rabbins and the Caraites, far from imitating the impious boldness of certain Nazarenes, or the ill-founded scruples of the Samaritans, preserve equally for the books of the sacred code, an infinite respect, without pretending to judge by the light of their reason

† The epistle general of St. James.

* Cum autem illud legisset, non rem diffimulavi, sed fatebar in responsione mea ad Gregorium Martinum. In illa quidem præfatione scribit Lutherum, S. Jacobi Epistolam non posse dignate certare cum Epistolis S. S. Petri & Pauli, sed Epistolam stramineam, si cum aliis comparetur. Quam ejus sententiam non probo, atque in recentioribus editionibus cum omissa sint illa verba, opinor ipsum postea Lutherum hanc suam sententiam improbase. Whitakeri Respons. ad Rainoldi Refutationem, p. 103.

of the worth of any of the inspired writings. But in avoiding this error they have run into another, which is common to them and to the Nazarene doctors; that is to say, they tear and torture certain passages, in order to bring them to favour their sentiments, and by this means they vouch all the vapours of their heated imaginations by these forced applications of the holy writings, insomuch that there is nothing so absurd, not only with regard to rites and ceremonies, but also with respect to the doctrines of religion, which they do not attempt to prove in this manner.

Is it, for example, possible to find out any thing more wild and extravagant than the rabbinical interpretation of this verse in the psalms? "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me." Instead of going into the opinion of the Nazarene doctors, who have fully proved, that the prophet speaks here of that original blemish derived to all men from their first parents, they will needs have it, that Jesse the father of David begat him in adultery, tho' on his own wife, whom he took to have been one of her maid-servants, upon whose chastity he had attempted. Is not this, dear Moncea, a fine explication of so clear and easy a text? And what opinion may we not expect to see supported by scripture proofs, alledged by the rabbins, when out of the plainest things, they can forge such romantick adventures, and gravely deliver so extraordinary a story as this of the pretended adultery of David's father, tho' there be not a word of it in the holy books?

An Italian Jew not only adopted this fabulous tale, in a work which he published, but even attempted to carry it further than any of his brethren had done, by making a pretty long dissertation to prove, forsooth, that Jesse had done perfectly well, in endeavouring to go to bed to his maid, because his wife was grown pretty far in years, and as he apprehended

apprehended past child-bearing *. This sentiment, my friend, contains an excellent moral, and if these wise and honest Rabbins would but effectually establish it, it would in all human probability contribute pretty much to the raising servants wages, in consideration of the likelihood of their finding more employment than at present.

Confess then, dear Moncea, that we Caraites have some reason to reject these Rabbinical comments; tho' as yet you are attached to their sect, it is impossible you should not see their errors. That uneasiness and embarrassment which naturally attends a man's changing his religion, keeps you as yet in the wrong track; but as I earnestly wish, so I sincerely hope, that the God of our fathers will afford you his victorious grace, which he vouchsafes to such as he leads to the knowledge of the truth; and that thereby breaking the chains which for the present bind you to the Rabbins, you shall come and range yourself under the banner of the Caraites, who are not only the true Jews, but almost the sole people in the world who submit their judgments to the divine writings, without attempting to abuse these, in order to establish their own opinions.

Many of the Nazarene doctors, as also of the ladies and mufties among the Musselman, run into the same fault with the Rabbies. They do not submit their opinions to those contained in the writings which they believe inspired, but explain all these works in a manner conformable to their own notions, insomuch that ten divines, each of a different opinion, shall equally pretend to support his own doctrines by authority of scripture; and it is this conduct, so inconsistent with publick peace and publick safety, that hath occasioned so many religious wars, and such broils and disturbances in states.

* Il Pensiero d' Isai era buono, perche essendo la Patrona, vecchia, e la Massera giovane, haveva Desiderio di haver altri Figliuoli. Percetti da esser imparati dalle Donne Ebrei.

The Nazarenes would be happy, my dear Monteca, if they did but observe the same laws with us Caraites, who never venture to write any commentaries on the sacred scriptures. It is held with us a prophanation, to mingle human opinions with divine laws. The Caraites believe implicitly whatsoever they find in the scriptures, without pretending to penetrate their obscurities, but submitting their understandings, when they meet with passages which transcend them. But for this wise and easy maxim, they would at this day be as full of trouble and confusion as other sects. They would have a train of doctors differing in opinions, and darkening by their discourses the points they pretended to illustrate, till by degrees so many and such arduous doubts would be brought into peoples heads, as in the end would lead them either into scepticism, or irreligion.

In order to prove the inutility of commentaries on the sacred writings, there is nothing more requisite than to shew, that they are calculated to do more hurt than good. Now there is nothing easier, than to produce the strongest evidence in favour of this proposition. It must, in the first place, be laid down as a principle, that since God has been pleased to give certain laws and rules to mankind, he has likewise been pleased to explain himself in a manner clear and intelligible: For it would be absurd to say, that God had revealed his will to man in such a manner, as that it was impossible it should be comprehended. Nor is it less unreasonable to say, that God commanded men to obey him, but however did not desire they should obey him. If therefore we are bound to acknowledge, that God hath revealed his will to men in terms perfectly intelligible, why should we attempt to explain them more clearly? A Divine, a Rabbi, a Mufti, or a Bronze, do they understand the extent of mens capacities better than he who made them? If he had intended to teach men the mysteries which these

these sort of people propagate, he would without question have taught them plainly.

But it may be said, that many of the sacred books are written evidently in a very obscure stile, and in which there are many things not to be understood. These, without question, were given by God to men for some use or other; and how shall this use be made of them, if they are not understood? It is necessary therefore to enquire into their hidden sense.

This manner of reasoning, dear Monceca, is however false and captious. If there are in the scripture certain passages which we do not understand, we ought to conclude that they are not necessary to our salvation, because we cannot perform what we are not informed of, and it is in vain for us to endeavour to penetrate those secrets which providence hath but half revealed. Heaven knows that it is for our good that we should not have clear ideas of some things, and when men would penetrate into these, this crime of theirs is punished by their feeling themselves bewildered. The Nazarene doctors who have employed their pens in writing commentaries on the Revelations, a very obscure piece, which they believe sacred, afford a clear proof of the truth of what I say. The protestants make this book the basis of all their invectives against the papists, and the papists again make use of the same book, in order to point out their adversaries in the most odious colours*. Is it possible to make a worse, or a more unwarranta-

* The Revelations hath been in all times one of the principal books whence the divines have drawn abundantly injurious expressions, in order to pelt those against whom they had a spite. What is still more singular, is, that the rabbies also have profited of these obscurities in the Revelations. They pretend that this book was written by one of their brethren, in order to deceive the primitive christians. See, in respect to this subject, the Letter CLX. As also the 4th letter of the Secret Memoirs of the Republick of Letters. In which letters this remarkable point of history is fully discussed, and the original passages from the rabbins also are there produced at large.

ble use of such works as are supposed to be dictated by the Deity himself?

Farewell, dear Monceca, live content and happy, and beware of indulging a rash spirit of curiosity.

LETTER CXLV.

The shocking sin of self-murder, too common in England.—Story of a Frenchman who killed himself to shew his bravery.—Some reflections on the heinousness of the sin of self-destruction.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

London.—

THE English, dear Isaac, are not satisfied with enjoying uninterrupted liberty in this life: They think also they ought to be permitted to quit it when their misfortunes press them too closely, whenever they grow tired of it, or of what passes therein. I was prodigiously surprized at my first arrival, at the frequent accounts I heard of such deaths. It sometimes happened, that a man I had conversed with in the evening, thought proper to cut his throat next day. Such as brought the news of this accident, instead of appearing astonished, generally approved the action mad as it was. If I enquired what the reasons were, which determined the distracted creature to take away his own life, “ We know not, answered they coldly, ‘tis very probable he did not like his situation in this world, and had a mind to see how they went on in the other. His life was his own, and acting as he did, he hurt nobody but himself.”

I fancied for a good while, that such as thus took it in their heads to make away with themselves did it in consequence of distraction, and I was very far from imagining that the English hang’d themselves, or cut their throats after mature deliberation; but by the many unhappy instances I have seen, and by the

relations I have had from persons of undoubted credit, I am convinced it is even so.

About two years ago a working man and his wife being both weary of the troubles they endured here, determined to put an end to them. They had a daughter of about five or six years of age. They thought it but reasonable not to leave her exposed to those mischiefs which they found too hard for themselves: On mature consideration, they resolved that she should make the voyage with them. When they had once settled and adjusted all things necessary for the execution of their design, they determined to justify it to the publick. Hereupon, they composed a narrative of their misfortunes, entered into a long detail of the miseries under which they had laboured, and the causes of their dying as they did. They complained, that in spite of their utmost endeavours in an honest way, they found it impossible for them to subsist; that they were more distressed the more they strove against their hard fortune. That in fine, they saw but one way left to avoid doing base things, and to this they had recourse, beseeching God, to whom, in quitting life, they bequeathed their departing souls, to have mercy upon them, as they firmly trusted he would. Having finished this their apology, they first cut the throat of their daughter, and then hanged themselves.

This pernicious custom of making themselves away, is far from being peculiar to the meaner sort of people, the great are not exempt therefrom. Men of figure and quality now and then cut their throats, as well as other folks, purely because the world is no longer pleasant to them. And so far is this from drawing any reflections or stain upon their memories, that they find very often numbers who approve and applaud them.

You cannot imagine, dear Isaac, for what slight reasons the English dispatch themselves. Some months ago, here was a man who did his business, because truly a new duty was laid upon strong waters. He would live no longer forsooth, since Geneva was to be

be dearer. I am credibly informed of the truth of a still stranger business. An Englishman on reviewing his life, fancied he saw in it a tedious repetition of the same things. "What, said he, have I been doing all my days? I rise in the morning; I eat and drink at noon; I walk about all day, and at night I go to bed; this without alteration, is my course of life. Part of my time is spent in dressing and undressing. A fine piece of drudgery truly! Come, come, I am quite jaded with this endless insipid part I am to act, and will even quit it and the world together". This resolution once taken, our Englishman to rid himself of his weariness, took up a pistol and shot himself through the head. Without doubt you must apprehend that a man who destroyed himself on so slight an account was looked on with horror. No such thing, the bravery he shewed in meeting his fate gained him the reputation of a hero. But if it had been known that he discovered any reluctance or apprehensions at the drawing near of death, it would have lessened his reputation. In vain had he killed himself, his effort would have been looked on with contempt. He who would acquire the character of a man of courage in England, must not only do the greatest crimes, but must also do them without any signs of shame or repentance.

Some years ago a Frenchman killed himself, but without deriving any reputation from it; on the contrary, he had the misfortune before he expired to hear himself loaded with the heaviest reproaches. He had, unhappily for him! taken it into his head to irritate the English. Whenever he heard of a man who had cut his throat, he felt an inward motion of envy, which at the same time stimulated him to follow so glorious an example. "You shall see one of these days, said he to his family, something will surprize you. I shall convince the world the French have as high spirits as the English. Yes, yes, this is a task I will take upon me". As he explained himself no farther, his friends and family could not divine what it was meant. After some deliberation, he at length

fully determined to vindicate the honour of the French nation, which he conceived to be excessively tarnished by their want of resolution to kill themselves. Accordingly he took a razor, and when he was left alone attempted to cut his throat. But wanting courage thoroughly to do his work, he only gave himself a large wound, and as soon as he saw the blood stream, he called in people to assist him. Some English who amongst others ran in, instead of affording him help, began to insult him, "These French dogs, said they, would needs imitate us, and yet have not the courage to cut a throat as it should be. Look now, look at this cowardly scoundrel, he has not cut deep enough by half an inch." While the English were making these fine reflections, in came the relations of the wounded person. A surgeon was sent for, but to no purpose, his care had no effect, the poor man after two days torture died, and died without demonstrating that equality he talked of.

I am out of all patience, dear Isaac, when I see people who use their senses to so good purpose in other matters of moment, neglect the use of them in things of the last importance, and run into so extraordinary an absurdity as to applaud such madmen, as for very light subjects of chagrin attempt upon their own lives. Not to treat the memory of such a man with proper indignity, who throws away his life without any real necessity, is foolishly to approve actions the most cruel and unnatural, which either melancholy or a brutal disposition can suggest. For from these sources flow, in fact, those effects which the English would willingly attribute to greatness of soul, and particularly this propensity to self-murder. All those bitter reflections by which they are led to this extremity of folly, are the produce of a dark, full, cloudy temper of mind, and of a fierce humour incapable of supporting with constancy the slightest change of fortune. It is therefore not thro' courage, but through weakness rather, that the English dispatch themselves as they do. To say the truth, there is much

much more spirit requisite to support generously an unforeseen adversity than to rid one's self of it by violent means.

The crime of such people as murder themselves is inexcusable, look upon it in what light you will. If we consider it as philosophers, we discover an exceeding weakness no way fit to enter into comparison with that firmness of the great men of antiquity, who died indeed bravely, but did not die unless they were forced to it for the preservation of their country, or their glory. Never did any Greek or Roman cut his throat out of too quick a sense of private misfortunes. The same hero who threw himself into a gulph to avert the danger of Rome, would have supported any private and personal misfortunes, without ever thinking of a violent death by way of discharge. Marius is an example of a great man induring adversity without any meanness. How many Englishmen would have dispatched themselves into the other world under such a persecution as that of Sylla? Proscribed, pursued, reduced to the hard necessity of hiding himself in a filthy morass, Marius still waited the decision of his fate from heaven, and thought it no way worthy of his heroick courage, to seek in death a refuge from his sorrows.

I am, dear Isaac, more charmed with the courage and firmness of a certain Spaniard, than with this ferocity they disguise under the name of a great spirit. This man with much industry laboured for twenty years together, to scrape up as much as might keep him comfortably in his old age. Fortune, however, in an instant stripped him of all that he had been saving. A merchant whom he had entrusted with his all broke, and left him not worth a groat. A hundred English would have resolved on a leap in the dark at such news. The Spaniard wiser, and of a juster turn of thought, determined to conquer adversity, and to make his destiny ashamed of her injustice. Preserving therefore his moderation and wonted resolution, he said, presenting a cord to for-

tune, "Here's a rope, foolish slut, take it and go hang thyself, since thou art not able to make me have recourse to hanging."

If, on the other hand, we reflect on this practice of self-murder, as it regards society and the publick tranquility, we shall find it extremely pernicious, and capable of producing great mischiefs. What revolutions, what confusions, what dangers may we not fear in a country where people not only get over all apprehensions of death, but of all that is to happen after it? It is most certain, that a man who is neither afraid of going hence, or of the place to which he may go, is capable of doing strange things before he takes his journey. There are no other ways of restraining people, but by religion or the fear of death. Now when both these cords are broke in any society, what disorders may there not be expected? A man who has committed the greatest crimes which can be imagined, may make a jest of all legal punishments however severe, if he only uses so much precaution, as to provide himself with the means of putting an end to his life as soon as apprehended. Murders, robberies, assassinations must be frequent. Kings themselves are not safe on their thrones. It is the nature of those torments to which such as attempt on the persons of princes are reserved, that deters parricides and traytors from such acts much more than the thoughts of dying. The last words of Cle-
ment the monk who assassinated Henry III. are clear proofs of this. "I bless God, cry'd that monster, while the soldiers stabbed him, that I die so easily; for I did not hope so quick a passage out of this life, or to escape at such a rate."

It must be confessed, dear Isaac, that there can be nothing more dangerous to a state, than to have in it a set of people not to be restrained by any fear of punishment. For one whom a sense of honour and probity keeps within the bounds of justice, there are a hundred restrained by fear. It cannot be denied, that men are more inclined to evil than to good. All customs, all usages which tend to weaken these bands,

are prejudicial to society. How much therefore ought we to abhor a crime which opens a door to all sorts of evils? And can it be esteemed less than madness to give this crime the titles of courage and greatness of soul?

Farewel, dear Isaac, and may'st thou always use thy reason in thy adversity.

LETTER CXLVI.

Critical observations on the English dramatic writers.

—Compared with the French.—The latter in Moncea's opinion, most excellent.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

London—

IT seems to me, dear Isaac, that the tragick poets among the French are as much superior to the English, as the philosophers of the former nation are inferior to those of the latter. I find as great a difference between Shakespear and Corneille, Addison and Racine, as between Descartes and Newton, Locke and Mallebranche. It is not that the poets of this country want fire, or a lively imagination; on the contrary, they have a great deal of spirit and force. But the mischief of it is, that when they have raised themselves up to heaven, they are immediately dazzled with their own height, sink all of a sudden as swiftly as they rose, and fully by their fall the honours they have acquired. As they have not the least knowledge of the rules, or if they affect to despise them, we need not be surprized that they are unable to conduct in a proper manner that strength of fancy which they derive from nature.

Whatever fecundity of invention! Whatever sprightliness of wit! Whatever boldness of sentiment there may be! yet regularity is wanting in all arts. The meanest architect who follows the rules of Palladio, will succeed much better than a mason who has genius,

genius, but who is notwithstanding ignorant and rash. The little church of St. Justina of Padua, affords the eye more pleasure than the pyramids of Egypt. Monuments of grandeur indeed! but which have a stronger relish of Eastern barbarism than of the graces of the Greeks and Romans.

Such is the state, dear Isaac, of the English theatre. I have seen there a great deal of genius, and yet very few good pieces: they play every day at London a kind of horrible farces, to which without hesitation they give the pompous names of tragedies. I have seen in a very fine English play, three witches introduced in the oddest manner imaginable, and pretending to boil herbs together in a caldron. I have sometimes seen the stage in the light of a church-yard, and grave-diggers diverting themselves with tossing skulls of dead persons about; nay, and which is ten times worse, I have seen this applauded.

Dryden, and above all Addison, hath taken pains to teach this barbarous Melpomene a little manners. But in spite of all their care, their tragedy has still too much of a savage appearance. It seems they are not able to attain that modest and majestic air which heretofore distinguished the Greeks, as it now does the French poets. Figure to your self, dear Isaac, the strange alterations made when Voltaire's tragedy of Zara came to be played on the English stage; they were forced to make that young princess tear off her hair by handfuls, and roul herself on the stage as if she had been in fits. One would think, that an author had little obligation to a translator for such extravagant additions. The English poet, however, was forced to accommodate the piece to the genius of his nation; that is, to make it succeed he made it ridiculous. In short, to obtain applause at London, it is absolutely necessary to exhibit beautiful monsters. If you keep too near truth, it will never do.

Yet this does not arise from a want of liking to natural descriptions; there are in Shakespear numberless

berless passages extremely just, and every way perfect. But what then? If these continue any time, the audience grow sick of them, and their attention must be awakened by something wonderful and out of the common road.

Within these few years, the English have had poets who have written very regular pieces; but they have not succeeded, because the audience thought them languishing and cold: In truth, I do not think they did them wrong; they were so in fact; and one would be apt to think, on seeing these modern tragedies, that the English poets had a faculty of straining their subjects, sallying beyond truth and nature to shew the force of their genius, and to be under a necessity of mingling in their best pieces the greatest beauties and the greatest faults. It seems, says a modern author *, that the English genius hitherto hath produced only irregular beauties. Shakespear's shining monsters are a thousand times more pleasing than the wisdom of modern poets. In short, the English poetry resembles a luxuriant tree, which in its natural state throws out a multitude of branches, and gives unequal marks of a prodigious force, and yet dies if you attempt to put a force upon nature, and to bring it into the mode of the garden at Marli.

How far off soever the English poets may be from the perfection and merit, which must be allowed to those who have cultivated the French tragedy; it is not however impossible, that some time or other they should reach, nay, go beyond them. That time will come, nay, I am persuaded it is near at hand, when the English shall correct all their errors. Their genius still remains, they begin by degrees to accustom themselves to the rules, and they will in time arrive at perfection in an art which hitherto they have not understood. In process of time they will join the wisdom, majesty, purity, and decency of the French theatre, to the strength, the sublimity, and the pathetick

* Voltaire, Lettres Philosophiques, Let. xviii. p. 162.

energy of the English tragedy, with an exclusion of whatsoever is monstrous, mean, or ridiculous. The poets of this country have a great advantage over others, by their introducing so much action in their plays; many even of the best French pieces are in truth but conversations in five acts, which we read with greater pleasure than we see, because the action languishes for want of a proper variety of incidents.

The theatres of Paris and London seem to me perfect representations of the characters of the two nations: At Paris they speak, at London they act. It is not therefore at all wonderful, that the French should speak better than the English, because every man is master of his own trade. For this very reason, the amorous intrigues in the French pieces are better wrought and conducted than in the English. We may venture after the same manner to determine on the merit of the two theatres. The character of the French is tenderness, love is their prevailing passion, it is their principal occupation, and gallantry is the soul of the court. The language of the heart is naturally that of the ladies, and tho' they will now and then contradict it a little in their behaviour, yet there is not one of them who will yield in the dignity of her expression to the heroine of a romance. It is a common thing at Paris, to meet with a female Platonick, who reasons with the greatest delicacy on the inconsistency between the communications of sense and affections in persons of distinguished birth; affirming, that love is confined only to the heart and to the thoughts, and yet makes her appointments every night.

In France the men speak and act in the same manner with the fair sex. They declaim against infidelity. They sometimes affect to condemn a woman who has tript. In short, there are certain moments when you would take a French petit-maitre for the original whence a romance character had been drawn. But if you watch his motions,

or consider his conduct but for four and twenty hours, you shall be able to detect him in twenty breaches of his system of amorous morality.

It is natural, dear Isaac, in a country where the language, the arts, the tricks and cheats of love, are so well understood, that they should be also well expressed. A painter who works after excellent models, and who has nature always before his eyes, will shew more spirit, and add more graces to his figures, than he who paints from idea, and the sole strength of imagination. Racine felt that love which he so well expresses in his verses. He said in prose to Chanmele*, all that as a poet he says to his heroines. We owe to his constitution and the taste of his nation a great part of those beauties which we admire in his works. If he had been an Englishman, he would without doubt have wanted this advantage. He must, in order to have pleased, have sought some other method of moving the spectators than by tender scenes, or he would have run the risque of failing, or falling into the error of Addison at least. The Cato of that author is a most perfect piece, if we take away a cold love-scene, which serves only to hinder the attention due to the rest of the play. If Corneille had been an English writer, he would have lost much less than Racine; because he had all the talents necessary to succeed on an English theatre. The last act of his Rhodogune is a master-piece which ought to be admired every where, but seems particularly calculated for London.

The English poets have strokes as beautiful and as sublime as any in Corneille, but then they are not so equal; if that author falls, it is neither so frequent, nor so perceptible; the French poet may be indeed low in some places. but the English are very often ridiculous. One is surprized at Paris to see so great a genius as Corneille making use, even in his best pieces, of low expressions; and we are apt to cen-

* A celebrated actress, with whom Racine was in love.

sure pretty freely, such thoughts of his as appear to be below the dignity of English tragedy. How often have the following lines in his Nicomedes been burlesqued?

Madame, encore un coup, cet Homme est---il à vous;
Et, pour vous divertir, est il si nécessaire,
Que vous ne lui puissiez ordonner de se taire?

But what would our Parisians, who are so nice as to style, say, if they were to see the Julius Cæsar of Shakespear represented on their stage, in which there is a scene where the coblers and taylors converse with Brutus and Cassius?

The same reason which incline people at Paris to pass by the faults of the great Corneille, serve at London to excuse those of Shakespear, and other tragick poets; their ravishing and sublime beauties strike us so much, that for the sake of them we pass by their faults. It is true, the English authors seem to stand in need of more indulgence than the French; but as the taste of that nation is not entirely formed, many things are as yet allowed, which will not pass in times to come.

Love is in possession of the theatre at London, as well as Paris, and there are few modern pieces in which it has not a large share. But as I have already told you, dear Isaac, the English poets have not so well succeeded in describing the motions of that passion, as in painting those of greatness of soul, valour, and of publick spirit. The character of Cato in Addison's tragedy, is perhaps the most beautiful that ever appeared on the theatre: That of Pompey in Cinna; that of Burrhus in Britannicus; nay, even that of Joash in Athaliah, is not so shining. Yet each of these tragedies is more perfect than that of the English author; because he had the weakness to please the women, who decide all things as well at London as at Paris, to introduce tender speeches, tho' he was unacquainted with the language of love.

This

This has occasioned his enervating the fiercest tragedy that perhaps ever appeared on any stage.

When the science of Sophocles and of Euripides comes to be thoroughly understood in England, it will be much more difficult for their poets than for the French, to produce any thing that is excellent, and capable of satisfying the taste of the nation. They will then be obliged to have complacency enough to treat of certain subjects, and to speak of some matters where their wit will not shine, as in other things, when the spectator has been moved by some impetuous speeches; when he has felt the force of poetick terror, and has been ravished by strokes truly divine, he must still be softned by the complaints of an unfortunate lover, in order to satisfy the ladies and the young people. It will be more difficult to touch this last passion than any of the rest, and there will seldom appear a genius capable of doing it.

It seems that the reigning philosophy, and the favourite system of politicks, maintain in England the same authority on the stage as in other places. Their poets are much more citizens of their own country than of Parnassus, and it is easy to discover the party they embrace in all their pieces.

Farewell, dear Isaac, live happy and content.

LETTER CLXVII.

The freedom enjoy'd by the subjects of England, compared with the slavery and tyranny practised in France.—An extraordinary instance of arbitrary law in the story of a young Chinese scholar and father Fouquet.—Observations on prime ministers.—Characters of cardinal Fleury, and Sir Robert Walpole.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

London—

WE see no such thing, dear Isaac, in this country, as people disappearing no-body knows how;

how; and being carried from their families, by a minister's order, are suffered to sigh out the remainder of their days, under the weight of arbitrary power, in prisons where no mortal can find them. A tradesman of London has no apprehension of being condemned without a hearing; they cannot keep a man here, even in the Tower without due course of law. A Lettre-de-cachet* is here an unintelligible term. Happy country, wherein fear belongs only to the guilty!

A private man in this kingdom is in no sort of fear of being falsely accused by any wicked rascal, kidnap'd thereupon from his house, and not allowed a hearing, till after a long confinement. The prejudices, nay even the hatred of the great, and of the priests, are harmless here. As long as a man is honest, and does nothing to the prejudice of society, he is under the protection of the laws, and till he violates them, he needs be in no pain. An Englishman needs not in the evening run over in his mind whatever passed in the day's conversation, from a dread of being hamper'd two or three years after for an unguarded expression. He acts and speaks freely, and may, in case he says nothing injurious to the laws, give his opinion freely on any subject. If a minister does any thing amiss, he condemns it roundly. Inasmuch as he is a member of society, the law presumes him honest, permits that he speak his sentiments to his friends, and secures him from falling into the hands of a lawless statesman, whose power sanctifies his errors, and stamps authority on his wrong steps.

They commend, dear Isaac, in this country, the great, if they have merit. By the same rule they blame them if they have none, or if their good qualities are exceeded by their bad ones. If cardinal Fleury was prime minister in England, the people of

* A Lettre-de-cachet is a mandate, by which a person is banished, or committed to prison, by the royal authority, not unlike warrants from a secretary of state in England.

London would do him justice, they would unanimously commend his abilities, his prudence, his integrity, his disinterestedness, his love for peace, and his regard for his master's glory. But it instead of this truly-illustrious minister, they had cardinal Du Bois at the head of their affairs, they would without scruple expose his conduct, nor shew him a grain the greater respect on account of his purple. In the midst of all his greatness, he discovered the vices of a pedantic life, and very ill became the rank to which he was raised, as much above his merit as his birth. Whatever liberty they might think fit to take with such a minister, they would have been so far from fearing its costing them their lives, that they would not have expected so much as a short exile. At Paris, however, they would have had more tenderness for a man who had violated all the laws, than one who had spoken freely of the notorious vices of that priest; whom at this day all the world condemns: The great and the mob agree in detesting his ill qualities. They cannot help admiring how he came to arrive at the helm. Yet, could he revive and be again possessed of power, most of those who now censure him so freely, would run as servilely as ever to offer him incense; the terror of a Lettre-de-rachet for a rash expression, would keep them in a shameful slavery, excessively detrimental to the publick, and to the prince, who can never be informed of the faults of his ministers, if the people are debarred the freedom of speech, and the right of carrying their complaints to the foot of the throne.

It is beyond all question as much the interest of sovereigns, as of their subjects, not to allow their ministers too extensive a power, or not to inquire into their conduct. Because it comes frequently to pass, that they themselves suffer for the blunders of those they trust. How happy would it have been for Henry III. (of France) if any courtier of his had been sincere enough to have shewn him the

danger into which he ran headlong, by his blind attachment, his wrong-placed affection, and his unworthy tenderness for his minions? But such is the fate of princes! They need counsel more than other men, yet no-body dares give it them. An unlucky experience hath confirmed most people's opinion, that the lot of such as venture to disabuse kings, is very unfortunate. If at first such an information is favourably received from a faithful subject, yet it often happens the minister finds a way to justify himself, and his justification induces of course the other's destruction. Sometimes again the minister hath no need of excuses, his master's confidence is an impregnable intrenchment; which, whoever attempts to force, is sure to perish. Heroes and great princes are liable to prejudices, as well as other men. It has so happen'd, that great monarchs have fancied their glory some way interested in supporting those they had made choice of, tho' they knew they were unfit for the posts they filled; of which Chamillard and others are recent examples.

Since then it is so dangerous, that it can scarce be expected a private person about a court should venture to tell important truths to a sovereign, true policy requires that the people should be permitted to bring their complaints, whatever they are, against ministers, directly to the throne. Otherwise all ministers must pass for infallible with their masters; since their faults could neither be disclosed by particular persons, nor the people in a body. It is therefore impossible to remove this mischief, so destructive to king and people, but by allowing the world to speak freely of the virtues and vices of great men, and absolutely suppressing what the French call Lettres-de-cachet, whereby a minister hath any man at his mercy with whom he is offended; and this, whether he has done any thing amiss or not.

In this point, dear Isaac, the English are perfectly right. There is no justice done, if any man is brought

brought to punishment otherwise than by open trial, and according to the known laws of the state. When once (under whatever pretence) we vary from this plain rule, we leave ourselves none; and it cannot but happen, that the innocent will frequently suffer, either through the calumnies of their private enemies, or the resentments of the great. Behold an instance as conclusive as extraordinary!

In 1723, father Fouquet, a Jesuit, returned into France, from China where he had resided twenty-five years, and was so unlucky as to have some disputes with his brethren, of a religious nature. He had taught some Chinese doctrines not altogether consistent with the rules of the society, of which memorials were carefully transmitted into Europe. Two persons of learning, who were natives of China*, came over with him. The one died on board the ship, the other, who came safe to Paris, was to go to Rome, in order to give evidence in relation to the conduct of the fathers in that part of the world from which he came. Father Fouquet, and his companion, lodged in the street of St. Anthony, and as secret as they kept their intentions, the Jesuits guessed at them, resolved to traverse them, and to be revenged. Father Fouquet, on his side, penetrated their design, and without losing a moment's time, took post one night for Rome, together with his Chinese man of letters. They followed with the utmost expedition, and came up unfortunately with the latter. As the unlucky stranger spoke not a word of French, the fathers applied themselves to cardinal Du Bois, to whom at that time they were necessary, and informing him that they had a young man amongst them who was become crazy, desired leave to shut him up. The cardinal, on this slight information, granted on the spot what he was always too liberal in granting, a Lettre-de-cachet. The lieutenant de

* A man of letters among the Chinese, is a person devoted to study, as other men to trades.

police who was charged with the execution of this order, when he came to seize the lunatick, found a young man who complimented him in the Chinese way, who seemed to sing rather than speak, and looked as in amaze. He expressed his concern at his condition, but sent him however to Charenton, where he was regularly whipped twice a-day, as the Abbe des Fontaines was since at Biffetre*. The poor Chinese, understanding nothing of the matter, took all this for the custom of France; and tho' he had been but two days at Paris, was heartily sick of their behaviour. In this manner he passed three years on bread and water amongst the reverend father floggers, and the poor distracted creatures who were flogged, without ever comprehending there were any third sort of people in France, but supposing it the sole employment of one part of the nation, to make the other dance to the whip. At the end of that space of time there happened a change in the ministry, and a new lieutenant de police was appointed: He began his office with a review of the prisons belonging thereto, and visited that of the mad folkes at Charenton amongst the rest. After he had examined all who were produced, he asked if there were none yet to see? They answered, but one, and that he was a poor creature who spoke a language no-body understood. A reverend Jesuit who accompanied this magistrate, assured him it was a kind of madness peculiar to this man not to answer in French, and advised him not to call for him, because it would be to no purpose. The lieutenant did not relish this advice; and so the young man was brought out. He presently fell on his knees to that magistrate, who caused several persons to speak to him in Spanish, Italian, Latin, Greek, and English, in vain, he only repeated the same word, Kanton; Kanton. The father piously affirmed he was possessed; but

* This anecdote is cleared up in the first part of Secret Memoirs of the Republick of Letters.

the lieutenant recollecting there was such a place in China, sent for an interpreter, who understood Chinese, and then the story came out. The magistrate knew not what to do, and for once a Jesuit knew not what to say. The duke of Bourbon, who was then at the head of affairs, being acquainted with the thing, took care to have the Chinese cloathed and provided for, till an opportunity offered of sending him home to China; whence, it is generally thought, few men of letters will for the future venture in the company of Jesuits to make the tour of Rome.

See, dear Isaac, how terribly these Lettres-de-cachet may be abused! How many wretches may yet labour under this tyranny, so inconsistent with all the rules of justice and equity? If a prelate finds himself at a loss how to deal with one of his clergy, he has nothing more to do than to inform against him as a Jansenist; a Lettre-de-cachet comes instantly forth, and he is disposed of for ever. A man so exiled, is so far from having it in his power to do himself justice, by explaining his conduct, that, generally speaking, he is prohibited all correspondence, and sent to reside in the midst of his enemies; who set their wits to work, by well-invented stories, to keep up, and even to augment the prejudice taken against an innocent person. How many people within this last age have been arrested, and lain long in loathsome prisons, on ill-grounded suspicions, and false accusations? What dreadful abuses have there been of Lettres-de-cachet? And how many still subsist? To such a height at length this evil came, that private people counterfeited these letters, and a criminal was hanged with this inscription in large characters on his breast, A FORGER OF LETTRES-DE-CACHET.

It is in vain, my friend, that in order to justify this practice of punishing without trial, the absolute power of princes, and the necessity of securing some sort of people is alledged. Both these objections

tions are trivial. Princes ought for their own interests to accustom the people to see all things done according to law. Besides, if they are lords, they are, at least they ought to be, fathers also to their subjects ; and equity in this case forbids that they should suffer—the weaker to be the victims of the more powerful ; or that any one man should have such authority, as to injure others with impunity.

If there could be any security had, that succeeding ministers in France would resemble the present, the prince might, without fear, intrust them with the management of his power without reserve. He might be assured that it would be exercised so as to make the people happy ; and they, on the other hand, would be so far from fearing any digressions from the ordinary rules of justice, that they would apprehend Lettres-de-cachet acts of lenity, serving to withdraw people from the too great severities of the law. But for one cardinal Fleury, there are thirty cardinals Du Bois. Is it then at all just, that the people should be exposed to the caprice of a man who abuses the power of his sovereign ; or that the lives and liberties of subjects should depend on the credit their enemies have with a prime minister ?

The principal care of kings ought to be rendering their subjects exact justice ; and thereby preventing the small from standing in fear of the great. It is therefore absolutely necessary, that every man should have an opportunity of defending himself in a legal way before he is condemned ; and that judgment should be pronounced by persons absolutely impartial and unbiassed. Observe one thing, my friend, that the minister is commonly, if not always, an adversary to those who suffer by these Lettres-de-cachet : Does not equity then require that there should be some judge between a private person and his avowed adversary ? What would be said of a court of justice, where, on the attorney-general's winding up his harangue against

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the criminals, they were hanged up without more ado? Would not all the world blame such a shameful dependency on the opinion of one man? And what, in this capacity of granting warrants, is a minister more than a peace-officer? It is true, those who offend against the laws ought to be punished; but then they ought also to be punished according as the law directs.

The fatal effects which follow wherever there are evil ministers, the bloodshed and murders they occasion, the prescriptions which they are but too ready to attempt on very slight provocations, are but too strong motives to induce sovereigns to act cautiously in the powers they indulge them, and not to suffer them to act but according to the rules which justice prescribes. It is not easy to say whether princes or private men are most concerned to see justice administered steadily, according to the established rules, and with the utmost solemnity. If the people have just cause to tremble at the despotic power of absolute ministers, their masters have no less cause to be alarmed, if they consider their desperate effects. If they could but know sometimes how much they stand indebted to such as oppose their ministers, and those whom they intrust with their affairs, far from allowing them to be oppressed, they would hear and make use of their counsels.

As to the rest, dear Isaac, I am sensible enough, that let a minister be ever so able, there will be uneasy and malicious men, who will oppose, thwart, and misrepresent his actions, however wise, however useful. It is not such sort of folks I would have kings regard, who are in truth but bad subjects, as well as indifferent men. When I speak of princes listening to private informations, I suppose them always to come from persons of known probity, and remarkably well affected. It would be ridiculous indeed to expect a monarch should listen to the clamour of a few seditious people; that would be an evil not much inferior to the former,

mer, since it is certain the greatest and the best cannot vanquish envy.

Cardinal Fleury in all probability will one day be more respected by posterity than cardinal Richelieu; at least, I am persuaded, that all philosophick judges of mankind will prefer him to all the ministers that have been in France. But this however does not hinder some from being blind enough, or knaves enough, not to acknowledge his virtues.

Sir Robert Walpole, who is the minister here, is a man of a vast penetrating and sublime genius, and is no less sollicitous for the good of his country, than attentive to whatever concerns the glory of his master: He supports, with wonderful capacity and consummate prudence, the whole weight of publick affairs: He has carry'd commerce and credit to the highest pitch. However, multitudes declaim against him. He has indeed more enemies than the French minister. In spite, however, of their impotent clamour, not only the most reasonable people among the English, but all Europe in general, do justice to his capacity, and applaud his merit. It is very possible his enemies would be more moderate, if his qualifications were less conspicuous. I am thinking Isaac, while I write, that if by any accident this letter had fallen into the hands of an English malecontent, he would not fail to assure you these praises were bestowed for certain reasons which he would have the charity to guess at. Nor would he ever admit, that I, tho' a Jew, a stranger in England, and unknown at court, would commend a person merely because I thought him commendable.

Fare thee well, dear Isaac, live happy and content, and may the God of our fathers cover thee with prosperities.

LETTER. CXLVIII.

The king of Portugal checks the pride of a patriarch.—The monks, &c. in Portugal bear great sway.—Don Sebastian and others ruined by following their advice.—The happiness of prince and people consists in the proper choice of ministers, monks not at all qualified for advisers in affairs of government.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Lisbon.—

AD weather and contrary winds, dear Moncea, have hindered my embarking. I wait with great impatience the happy moment when I shall quit this country. In spite of my disguise, notwithstanding all the precautions I take, I am under mortal inquietudes. I am terrified when I consider the avarice of the monks, and I perfectly tremble, when I call to mind their excessive power in this place. Yet, excessive as it is, it is much less so than ever it was in times past; judge then to what a length it was once carried, and with what infolence and tyranny they abused it.

There has happened here within these few days an adventure very mortifying for the priests. The goaler and his archers, who have the custody of the prison of the officiality, committed all sorts of crimes: they robbed, beat, abused the prisoners at their pleasure, and gave all the liberty they could desire, to some who had it in their power to pay for it; so that the most guilty were favoured most. The corregidor or chief magistrate of the city being informed of these irregularities, caused the goaler and some of his mirmidons to be apprehended and conducted to the publick prisons. Upon this the patriarch took fire, as supposing himself bound at all events to support these rascals, because they depended

depended on his jurisdiction. He therefore excommunicated the corregidor immediately, as guilty of a great and notorious crime. That magistrate being extremely sensible of this affront, appealed to the king, informed him of the injurious treatment he had received, and met with the redress he expected. The king easily apprehended that the insult offered to this magistrate reflected on the crown, and that his majesty's authority was wounded by this act of presumption in the patriarch. In fine, he was compelled to recall his excommunication, and even to write a very polite epistle to the corregidor, beseeching him to excuse the rashness he had shewn in endeavouring to exclude him from the communion of the faithful.

This just and commendable action of the king's, which in any other country would pass for an ordinary occurrence, it belonging to the royal authority to do justice in all cases to its subjects, is looked on here at Lisbon as a very bold thing, and worthy of the most heroick courage. The French could not make more to do about the pyramid which Lewis XIV. caused to be erected in the midst of Rome, than the wisest of the Portuguese do about this action, so glorious for the king, so equitable for the magistrates, and so mortifying to the ecclesiasticks. This will however appear the less extraordinary, if you consider the difference between the characters of the French and Portuguese: You will then easily acknowlege that it was not more difficult for the monarch of France to humble the Pope, than for the king of Portugal to check the pride of the patriarch, who is revered as a kind of divinity by seven eighths of his subjects.

Whenever at Paris the sovereign is inclined to act against the Roman pontiff, all things favour his design. The parliament sees its mortal enemy humbled with pleasure. Many ecclesiasticks bless the hand which protects the rights of the Gallican church. The people are thankful for the preservation of their Liberties. And as for the great, those everlasting slaves

laves of the throne, ready to turn Turks if the king put on a Turban, they go to bed Molinists and rise Jansenists, as their interests direct them. Their concern for their fortunes regulates their faith. If circumcision was the only road to preferment how many brethren, dear Monceca, should we have at court?

People in Portugal think in quite another way. The Priests, the monks, and the inquisitors are all concerned in supporting the authority of their chief; any attempt on him rouzes them all. A prodigious crowd of bigotted laicks, instead of opposing the invasions of the ecclesiasticks, respectfully kis the cords with which they are bound. The people in general, grossly superstitious, never distinguish between the interests of priests and that of religion. Blind alike in judgment and in conduct, to what excess may they not be carried when influenced by the authors of their enthusiasm? There remains therefore to support the king in any such design of moderating the power of the clergy, only such as in spite of national delusion have the courage to make use of their reason. Amongst these we may generally reckon the men of quality whom a good education and conversation with the world hath qualified to see farther than others into the frauds of priests, the avarice of churchmen, and the difference between the interest of religion, and that of the clergy. But however considerable this success may be, it is not to be compared with the facility the king of France meets with in the prosecution of the like design. There is therefore as high a spirit, and as great degree of courage necessary to do small things at Lisbon, as to perform great and celebrated exploits at Paris.

The reigning king of Portugal has had several struggles with the court of Rome. He has indeed done what none of his predecessors durst attempt. And by his firmness he has always hindred them

from carrying their point. Happily for himself and his kingdom, he is always ready to hear the advice of true patriots, and which is more, to follow when he has heard it.

The misfortunes which don Sebastian drew upon himself, by blindly and imprudently following the advices of monks, ought to deter all future kings of Portugal from such a proceeding. That unfortunate monarch ruined himself by yielding to the persuasions of some Jesuits he had about him, who engaged him to give the Moors battle, tho' their army was three times as strong as his own. These priests flattered him with the hopes of miraculous assistance. But alas this failed! and that imprudent and unhappy prince paid with his life for his weakness and credulity; a just, indeed, but sure a severe chastisement for his facility in suffering himself to be directed by monks in things so remote from their profession, as is whatever relates to arms.

The fate of don Sebastian was so much the more unhappy, since many have inclined to think that the Jesuits gave him this advice on purpose to destroy him. Tho' this is a thing by no means certain, yet some have ventured to adopt it as an indubitable truth. Some there are, says Brantome*, who assure us that the Jesuits did and said all with good intention; others again suppose they were seduced and corrupted by the king of Spain, to push this unfortunate young prince, too full of courage and of fire, on his fate that the Spanish monarch might the more easily seize what it is certain he afterwards did seize.

If, dear Moncea, you should inquire what my judgment is in respect to this dispute, I must freely own that it is a doubt with me which opinion has the greatest appearance of truth. It may be alledged that this ought to be added to the long list of imaginary crimes which the enemies of the Jesuits have placed to their account, as no doubt that such a li-

* Dames Galantes, Tom. ii. p. 88.

there is: But then it may be on the other hand suggested, that it is by no means improbable that the jesuits, so much at that time devoted to the king of Spain, should take this step, in order to his acquiring dominions he had already swallowed in imagination, since in that case, they only acted in reality in Portugal, what most zealously, as well as basely, they endeavoured to bring to pass in France in the times of the league.

Don Sebastian is not the sole monarch who has fallen through too great confidence in priests. Louis king of Hungary was slain in a battle against the Turks, which engagement was owing to the obstinate persuasions of a cardinal in whom he had too great trust. A French king of the same name, after he had, at the solicitation of the clergy, made many wars, as bloody and without use to his kingdom, as cruel and unjust with respect to his unhappy subjects, went at last to fall amidst the ruins of Carthage, where perish'd with him, at least, one half of a gallant army, which he had transported from France into Africk.

One of the greatest mischiefs which, in my opinion, dear Moneeca, can befall a sovereign, is his paying any sort of attention to a set of people, who, void of all knowledge in the affairs of the world, are full of a wild as well as false zeal for religion; which induces them to approve and execute, as far as they can, the most extravagant designs. A man who has capacity enough to direct thirty devotees, may and must want the talents necessary to govern a kingdom. States are not regulated as convents are, nor must we expect from subjects what superiors look for from their monks. Yet how often have we seen princes shrinking into the despicable character of slaves to their confessors, and learning at the feet of their clergy what ought to be the fate of their people, till they became themselves the mere organs of a monk or priest? Among the protestants, where the clergy pretend to keep to their institution and to stick to their duty, there are too many for directing their masters.

What amazing alterations in the affairs of England, nay, and of the affairs of the high allies, were produced by the political sermons of one Sacheverel? Elsewhere have we not seen a certain preacher, tolerably bright for a Norman, giving himself the airs of a statesman, and treating cavalierly enough the evangelick ministry? In a word, is it not generally remarked, that every where these people are but too well heard?

Happy is the prince who knows how to make a right choice of those he honours with his confidence. It is on that choice his glory and his peace depend. How many sovereigns stand distinguished to posterity, who were perhaps but men of moderate parts, and would have appeared so, but for their ministers of state. The epithet of Great, so liberally bestowed on princes, would in most cases, if narrowly scann'd, belong rather to their ministers. Unassisted by Agrippa and Mecænas, where should we have placed Augustus? The history of Louis XIII. what is it but the shining acts of Richelieu? Louis XIV. was indeed a great king; but the Condes, the Turennes, as well as the Luvois and Colberts, had no small share in acquiring the glories of his reign. The monarch now reigning in France hath a thousand and a thousand virtues, worthy the esteem of remote posterity. He possesses, above all, that sweetness, that beneficence, that wisdom and piety, which rendered Titus the master of the hearts of mankind. These qualifications are never the less his, on account of the obligations he owes to that wise minister he has chosen to direct his councils. If Burrhus and Seneca had not been succeeded by Narcissus, Nero had been always virtuous. It was the minions of Henry III. misled and ruined that unhappy prince.

In all situations of life, evil counsellors and wicked acquaintance are dangerous; but they are still more so to princes: A private man will find a thousand persons ready to open his eyes, by reproaching him with the wrong steps into which bad advice drew him; whereas courtiers approve and applaud whatever the

prince

prince does, be it ever so bad; so that he has no resource but to the advice of some faithful friend, to whom he accords the liberty of speaking freely. There are but few princes wise enough to act thus, which is the reason why there are few princes who escape suffering by a contrary conduct; and which is still worse, all their faults recur on a multitude of innocent people, who, tho' they have no part in their offences, suffer for them*. The errors of princes are desperate scourges for their subjects. The plague is more merciful to men than the mad ambition of princes to their neighbours. Famine cannot reduce a country so low as it may be brought by the luxury and vanity of a prince criminally avaricious of what is the produce of his subjects labours and sweat, and prodigal at the same time of his own revenue to a flattering courtier, or some faithless concubine. Rain, storms, and inundations, do not mischief people more than a prince's idle love, or the pensions paid to corrupt the ministers of his neighbours.

Happy are those nations where monarchs study to act like tutelary Deities, by preserving peace and abundance to their subjects, without expecting they should erect temples in their turns any where but in their hearts. Such were the sentiments of those excellent monarchs who seem born for the good of mankind, and who were anciently, thro' gratitude, numbered with the Gods. Those heroes, who placed all sense of greatness in the good they did to others, what would they have thought if they had seen one king stiled Great, for destroying a whole people, and establish his glory on rapine and murder? Another Magnificent, for impoverishing his subjects? And a third Intrepid, for his delight in slaughter? They would have thought, no doubt, such titles very ill bestowed.

Farewell, dear Moncea, live content and happy, and may the God of our fathers bless thee with abundance.

* Quidquid delirant Reges plectuntur Achivi.

LETTER CXLIX.

Moncea's sentiments with regard to the English Comic writers.—He gives the bays to Congreve.—A touch at the critics.

AARON MONCECA TO ISAAC ONIS.

London—

I Wrote you some days ago, my dear Isaac, my sentiments as to the merits of the English tragic poets: I shall now proceed to give my judgment on the comic writers. They seem to me to exceed those I mentioned first a good deal. I went yesterday to a comedy, and I was very well satisfied with the performance: The characters were in nature, the plot well laid, the style chaste; &c. and, which was much more important, the moral was wholesome and just, accompanied with a strong well-turn'd vein of humour. This piece fell from the pen of Congreve, the best, the wisest, and the most modest of all the English authors in this way. It had been well if Wycherly and Vanbrugh had wrote as perfectly: Their works, to speak the truth, are full of bold strokes, and abound with wit, but they too often bear hard on modesty, and make the stage an engine of corruption, whereas it ought to be a school of morals.

It is without hesitation, my dear friend, that I place the best pieces of Moliere far above the productions of Wycherly. Besides their surpassing them in delicacy, they also are exactly suited to the decency which ought to appear in all publick spectacles, in order to free them from any dread of those too zealous doctors ever burning with a strong inclination to decry them. The best argument which we can possibly use in favour of the theatre, is its usefulness in correcting manners. The spectacles or publick representations of the present age are certainly adorned with sentiments which render them very instructive.

Few

Few people of rank are very attentive at sermons, whereas at the play-house they mind what is said well enough. I dare say therefore, that Moliere's comedies have done more service among the courtiers, than the sermons of Bourdaloue and Massillon. Without teasing you with examples, do but remember how much good was done by that single play of *Précieuse Ridicules*. But for that excellent comedy, the French, and their neighbours in imitation of them, had to this day affected manners still, impertinent, and unnatural; and had delivered themselves up to an affected way of speaking, which was the mode for several years among a multitude of people. If we drive from the stage that modesty which is a necessary part of good manners; if instead of amending the heart while we amuse the imagination, we do our utmost to corrupt both, by giving seducing pictures of vice, as in the little entertainments of Dancour and other pieces of the like stamp; whatever genius may appear in the execution, we ought only to be regarded in the same light with poisoners, who afford, if they can, an agreeable flavour to make their mortal drenches go the more easily down.

Wycherly seems to have collected with the utmost care the subjects capable of admitting a criminal intrigue; those which did not admit one, he forced to that purpose; and even such pieces as he purloin'd from Moliere he corrupted from his taste. That comedy wherein he has made use of *L'Ecole de Femmes*, though full of fire, and by no means deficient in wit, is yet far short of the wisdom discoverable in his model. Instead of Moliere's sagacity in making a future husband risque his spouse's fidelity, and his caution in avoiding any expression tending to a breach of decorum, Wycherly introduces a man pretending to be a eunuch, and letting all the world into the secret of his incapacity: The husbands, charm'd with such an innocent inamorato, bring their wives readily into his company. The false Origen having made choice of a country lady, obtains of her the last favours; and if, unluckily for the English, their

their comic writers were not somewhat nicer than their tragic poets, they might have in the conclusion of the play a very fine scene on the stage, at least in their way. There could not certainly be any thing in it more shocking or absurd, than in the introducing in a tragedy a husband strangling his wife with his own hands ; a thing the English see not only without horror, but with all the marks of admiration, in the Moor of Venice.

One may venture to affirm, my friend, that if the writers of English tragedies are to be justly charged with offending against the rules of their art, the comic authors are not less culpable in respect to their transgressions against modesty and good manners. The latter are indeed more perfect in their way. Wycherly and Vanbrugh come nearer to Terence and Moliere, than Dryden and Shakespear to Sophocles and Euripides, Corneille and Racine. We sometimes meet in their works with strokes bolder and more sparkling than in the Greek, Latin, or French poets; but the lustre of these fine things is more than obscured by long passages utterly irreconcileable to decency and decorum, and wherein the authors seem lost to shame.

Congreve's pieces are the most perfect comedies the English have. He is indeed a worthy rival of the great Moliere, and hath perhaps fewer faults than he. Congreve is exact, lively, prudent, cautious in his expressions, and who never runs into low ridiculous pleasantries purely to keep up the laugh. He is thoroughly acquainted with mankind, and all his characters are natural, full of truth, and exceedingly striking. If the English comedies in general were as good as his, the theatre at London would surpass that at Paris ; but in the first place, his plays are but few; and in the next, few of their authors come near him.

The meanest of the comic writers in this country have a custom pleasant enough : They pillage Moliere, they disfigure his best pieces, and criticise him with the utmost insolence. That author is really as ill-

ill-treated in England, as Homer, Virgil, Horace, &c. by the adversaries of the ancients. All the dablers in Parnassus open against him as a common enemy, and yet do their utmost to make their miserable pieces go off, by interlarding them with sentiments stole from him; it is true, they manage these so scurilily, that if one was to form a judgment of Moliere by the samples they give us, we should condemn that illustrious writer without mercy. But what effect on his reputation can the attempts of these blotters of paper ever have, or what can a few authors of miserable damned farces say to prejudice him? I am assured that Congreve has the highest esteem in the world for Moliere's writings, and no poet of eminence among the English ever decried his plays. How is it possible to be so prejudiced, as not to be sensible of the delicacy, the salt, the good sense, which reigns in his Tartuffe, his Misanthrope, his School of Women, and his Learned Ladies? Corneille and Racine never put pen to paper against Sophocles or Euripides: On the contrary, they gave those authors all the praises they could bestow. Boileau and Pope are zealous advocates for the honour of Homer and Virgil; is it not surprizing, that only the Peraults, the Teraffons, and other second-rate authors, should form the ridiculous design of tarnishing the glory of those ancient heroes? Scarron, d'Affouci, and Marivaux, who in attempting to travesty Virgil, Ovid, and Fenelon, have rendered themselves ridiculous, are however far less blameable than these people, because they had still high thoughts of their originals, tho' they drew after them miserable copies.

It seems in the learned world a necessary consequence of attaining a certain pitch of reputation to be attacked by these Zoilus's, the scum and off-scouring of letters. I do not know, Isaac, whether ever it might enter your head to consider the number of bad books written against the best authors. There is not one, however eminent, who has escaped criticism: and which is worse, those who venture to carp at

at them, do it as if they were every way their superiors, and were taking to task the works of Bonnecorse or Pradon.

Not to speak of the impertinent Parallel between the ancients and moderns, in which they have shewn less care to demonstrate the equality between the ages of Louis XIV. and Augustus, than to injure the characters of the Greeks and Romans, how many miserable criticisms have we seen against the tragedies of Corneille, Racine, Crebillon, and Voltaire? It is true, their performances are applauded notwithstanding, and these silly attacks are forgot; yet it is still true, that such things were once published, and that there were not wanting fools who admired them.

Is it not a certain truth, that a folio was published against Bayle's dictionary? It is owned that men of taste laugh'd at the attempt. However, it was approved by some half-letter'd folks; nor was the contempt of good judges sufficient to hinder the sale of this dull piece among those who buy at random, and whose indigested collections are not so properly Bibliotheques as Bibliotaphs. You must allow me this word, in order to express a place where dead books are buried.

A certain monk* was weak enough to publish a dissertation full of invectives against the characters of la Bruyere. Some numsculls had the patience to read it, and others of their brethren would still afford it that honour, if the translator of Locke had not taken the pains to exhibit the nakedness of that criticism to the publick.

Montaigne, long after his death, sustained the spite of the Jansenists. Certainly his works are in as much esteem as ever, while the criticism would scarce be remembred if it was not taken notice of in the preface to the last editions of that author's essays.

Dr. Stillingfleet wrote against Locke. By good luck his criticism was never translated; so that it was

* A Carthusian who wrote under the Name de Guerre of Vigneul-Marville.

never known to a great part of Europe, otherwise it would without question have had its admirers.

The fate of so many excellent works hath almost induced me to believe it ought to be accounted one of the marks of a good book, that it hath been criticized. If this was certain, one would allow that the journalists of Trevoux have for many years past done the labours of the Jansenists great service, as well as to those of protestants and other adversaries, by not allowing one of them to be tolerable. In order to be even with them, I have often thought that instead of that foolish insipid thing called Nouvelles Ecclesiastiques, they ought to set up some kind of literary journal, and therein tear without mercy the fine writings of Petau, Sirmond, Bourdaloue, de la Rue, Daniel, &c. and cry up the poor performances of nameless authors, who, with all the rage of party, abused the society. But indubitably they have been discouraged from this by the bad reception given to the Journal de Trevoux. They must have perceived that the publick hath long disregarded what is said of many books in that Molinist Journal, and conjectured from thence what favour would be shewn to a Jansenist collection in the same taste. They have therefore made it their choice to bring out a weekly sheet suited to the genius of the many, hoping by these courses through the open country to do some mischief to an enemy possessed of all the places of strength. Happy for them that their adversaries have also run themselves into extravagancies, and thereby ruined their credit, which would otherwise have been much better than that of the Jansenists. Infinite numbers of persons of judgment have been disgusted, when on considering the conduct of both parties closely, they have been convinced that they are equally animated by rage and resentment.

If we speak the truth dear Isaac, we must confess, that when one reflects coolly on the transactions in the Republick of Letters, one is provoked to see how little sincerity appears, and how much injustice and partiality

partiality is evident in the criticisms and decisions of the learned, in regard to the writings of their adversaries.

Fare thee well, my dear friend, live content and happy, and never embarrass thyself with captious or testy people.

LETTER CL.

A sensible proof of the weakness of the human understanding, exemplified by observations on the absurdities which many great philosophers have fallen into.—Mallebranche instanced.

AARON MONCECA, TO ISAAC ONIS.

London—

THE greatest philosophers fall sometimes, dear Isaac, into the same faults and puerilities with which they reproach their adversaries. They forget those principles on which they establish their own arguments against scholastic chimæras. They affect to establish such strange opinions, and to explain such inexplicable things, that we turn, with justice, upon themselves their criticisms on certain authors whom they have treated with sovereign contempt.

Observe, my friend, how Mallebranche hath explained himself on the bold and yet ill-founded decisions of Aristotle: “ Certainly an extraordinary measure of faith is necessary in order to credit what Aristotle thus advances when he affords only logical proofs, and when he explains the effects of nature no otherwise than by the confused notions of sense, especially when he decides roundly on questions which seem above human reach. He therefore tells us, very often as well as peremptorily, that we are to take his word, it being a settled point with this author, that a disciple is to believe*”.

* Mallebranche. Recherche de la Verité. Livr. ii. p. 18.

What

What think you, my dear Isaac, of a philosopher who condemns so expressly, such as advance opinions which they can neither prove nor explain clearly, and yet decides with an air of authority, on the cause of evil with respect to mankind, and explains philosophically the justice of the Deity with regard to the damnation of children, which some Nazarenes hold inevitable tho' they die in the cradle, if they have not gone through a certain ceremony which is equivalent to circumcision amongst us. If Mallebranche had said simply what every man of sense ought to say, that he submitted the lights he derived from nature to the dictates of faith, according to the notions entertained of such mysteries by his church, and had alledged he believed that children were damned, even who died in their cradles, because he apprehended it to be so reveal'd, and therefore received it as an article of faith, he would have merited praise for knowing how to set bounds to human curiosity; but instead of this, he has gone further than ever Aristotle did, whom he reproaches; and has said more extravagant things, and attempted to explain more unintelligible mysteries in four lines, than the Greek philosopher has discovered in his eight books of physicks.

Behold, my friend, the pompous and sublime Salimatias, by which Mallebranche would prove that it is reconcileable to the divine justice, to punish an infant for a sin in which it had no part. "A mother, says this philosopher, whose brain is full of traces which must have been left by objects introduced by the senses, and which she could not efface by reason of the concupiscence reigning in her, as having not power over her body, communicates them to her child, who, springing from her is a sinner tho' she herself may be just. The mother is just, because she actually loves or hath loved God by choice, neither doth concupiscence render her criminal tho' she may have followed its motions in

sleep. But the infant she carries, having never loved God by choice, nor ever turned its heart towards him, it is most evidently in disorder and blindness, nor can there be any thing in it but what is worthy of his wrath."

I don't know whether you observe, that all these sublime illusions are reducible to this: a mother brings forth a son a sinner, because she communicates to him the concupiscence, of which she is guilty. She hath however a power of delivering herself, because she is at liberty to use her reason and to love the Deity; whereas her son ought to be damned, as not having the faculty of reflecting on himself, and the power of loving God.

Do you not perceive a fine chain of reasoning flowing from excellent principles? I will, for a moment, suppose myself that Aristotle, whom Mallebranche has so grievously insulted. "Tell me, would I say to him, thou French metaphysician, who inform'd you that a mother could communicate to a creature incapable of reflection, concupiscent desires, which ought to render it miserable? what proofs have you that it is consistent with God's justice to punish an innocent for a fault committed without its knowledge, and also through necessity? be pleased, if you think it possible, to shew me how an infant in its mother's womb can resist the impressions it receives from her? if then it is incapable of resistance and is obliged to follow the general laws of nature, is it not ridiculous to say that it is punished for doing what was necessary for it to do? I would rather chuse to say that a child becomes a sinner after it is born, by sucking the milk of a nurse who is a sinner, than to ascribe it to the impression made thereon in its mother's womb. The first of these positions is less repugnant to good sense, because a child may live without sucking, but not without feeling the motions communicable by his mother while he remains within her."

You must own, my good friend, this is a pleasant way of explaining the source of human misery. What would

would the ancient Greek philosophers say, could they return to life again, to those French wits who have dealt with them so sharply, and who are yet for explaining original sin, as some physicians account for the marks or blemishes with which children are born.

The conclusion drawn by Mallebranche is still more absurd than the principle from which he draws it; after shewing the manner in which infants become criminals, he concludes, that not having the power of knowing God, and of consequence of repenting and seeing their faults, it is but just they should be damned.

Is there any thing more extraordinary, than to suppose what is so opposite to any rational idea of God, that he should punish such creatures of his as have not only no power of resisting sin, or of repenting of it, but which is much worse, have really no use of reason, and act only by a kind of instinct? for I cannot apprehend, that even father Mallebranche would assert, that a child in the womb ought to be a doctor of the Sorbonne, and in consequence thereof, know that one who loves not God by a love of choice and whose heart is not turned towards the Deity, is not in any other state than that of disorder and blindness, and in which there is nothing but what merits the wrath of God. An infant is ignorant of all this, even many years after its birth. How then should it have any such ideas in its mother's womb? if then it has no sort of notion either of good or evil, and its soul, tho' of a spiritual nature, acts as yet but as the germ in a plant, is there not a visible absurdity in saying it is punished on account of the matter which serves for its aliment?

When certain Nazarene doctors attempt to give philosophical reasons in support of this doctrine, I fancy to myself so many fools arguing for the cutting down of orange-trees, because the gardener who planted them had done something amiss. A man of learning must lay his account with saying very silly things,

things, when he will, by the light of his reason, endeavour to explain points of pure revelation. By it we are directed to believe mysteries. Let us believe them then without allowing reason, under pretence of explaining, to render them incredible by making them appear absurd,

It is however certain, that if we embrace this sentiment, it brings along with it great difficulties. If one ought, it will be said, to submit blindly to what we are assured has been revealed, there is nothing but may be supported by revelation. In all religions, in the Jewish, the Nazarene, the Mohammedan, the most absurd chimæras are received. How many ridiculous things do many of the Rabbies, an infinite number of Christian divines, and multitudes of Dervises and other Turkish enthusiasts, pretend to have been positively revealed? to this I answer, that we ought to examine carefully if a thing hath been revealed or not. But I say, that this inquiry finish'd, and we throughly assured that a thing hath been revealed, there remains no more room for doubts about it.

When I assert that a Jew should submit his understanding to revelation, I do not mean that he should receive and adopt all the notions of the Rabbies as so many articles of faith; if they attempt to impose on him an error, let him, as soon as he has seriously and throughly considered, reject it. But if any doubts enter his mind, as to facts recorded in the holy scriptures, the authenticity of those books and their revelation should incline him to humble himself and to receive them implicitly, without seeking by human reasons to explain divine mysteries; lest, by sharing the presumtuous folly of Mallebranche in such an undertaking, he should, as he inevitably must, expose himself to those reproaches which are very justly bestowed on that vain philosopher.

I return, my dear Isaac, to my first idea. Is it not very surprizing that a great genius, an author of the first class, who sees so clearly the giddiness of another writer and his gross mistakes, as to refute them

them invincibly, should nevertheless fall immediately after into the same errors, without perceiving that he acted therein directly opposite to his own principles, or at least to those on which it became, in his opinion, a philosopher to argue? Such a deplorable blindness is a very sensible proof of the weakness of human understanding, and of that foolish prejudice a man is apt to entertain for whatever comes from himself; he fancies there is nothing hid beyond his reach, yet he condemns others for having attempted to explain unintelligible things; but fancies, at the same time, a power in himself of succeeding even in those things which he censured others for attempting. Most of our modern philosophers, and the metaphysicians especially, have done nothing but added new mistakes to those which the ancients left behind them, and for which they insulted them so grossly, as themselves will be, in process of time, by their successors, who probably will do nothing more than augment the doubts and uncertainties with which philosophy is already encumbered.

To me it seems probable, that the outrageous criticisms of each other's systems which the philosophers daily publish, are the just punishments of their pride. To this I am the rather led, because I have always observed, that in the same proportion a man is vain of his discoveries, his enemy contemns them. The fate of Aristotle of late is little better than that of Cottin and Pradon. The Cartesians have carried their aversion to access, they take no pains to distinguish the good from the bad, but condemn, without distinction, all the works of the Greek philosopher, tho' there are abundance of useful things in them. If the great tutor of Alexander were to revisit the world, he would be surprized to see his works, which made formerly such a noise, now valued only by a few monks. His single consolation would be, to see the same fate attend his two great antagonists, Descartes and Mallebranche, whose works grow daily into discredit. The prudence, the sincerity, the candor, the pen-

tration of those of Locke, have drawn all the wiser part of the logicians and metaphysicians to his party; on the other hand, those who study physics are all become disciples of Newton. And the extraordinary modesty with which these two philosophers have delivered their opinions, will effectually secure them from a like reverse of fortune.

Adieu, dear Isaac, may the God of our fathers continue to heap on thee his blessings.

LETTER CLI.

A conversation between Aaron Monceca and a Cabballist, relating to the art of making gold.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

London—

I Have met, dear Isaac, here in England, with a Cabballist, whom I first became acquainted with at Hamburgh. After complimenting him on his late arrival, I intreated him to allow me the honour of conversing with him some time during his stay in this city. I give you my consent, said he, with a great deal of pleasure to what you desire, and I promise you that I will not conceal from you any of the mysteries of our art. Charmed with so frank an offer, as well as with the opportunity of knowing whether there were any thing real in that science or no, I thanked him in the warmest and tenderest manner words would permit. I am willing, continued he, to begin this very day to explain to you the first principles of Hermetick philosophy. Let us go take a walk in some proper place, where we need apprehend no interruption. I readily followed my new master, and took a seat with him in the corner of a publick garden, which is so far from being over-frequented, that it sometimes looks like a desert.

We were hardly sat down when the Cabballist lifted his eyes to heaven, kept silence for some minutes, and

and seemed to be wrapt in a profound contemplation. Then coming to himself again, he fetch'd a deep sigh, asking me if I had never read any books treating of their art? I answered him, that I had looked over several, but that I found them so obscure, that they had absolutely deprived me of all hopes of being able to find out their sense. At these words the Cabballist fetched another deep sigh. "See, said he, the sad effects of the wickedness of men. The sages are obliged to veil, and to conceal the knowledge of the treasures which they possess even from men of worth, who ought to participate of them, through a fear that wicked and prophane people should make use of their writings. All the learned secretaries of nature have therefore chosen to write so obscurely, as to render it simply impossible to penetrate the meaning of their discourses, unless enlightened by the holy spirit, or by some master of the art. Insomuch that these illustrious philosophers plainly avow, that they write not for all sorts of readers, but for the chosen scholars of the golden doctrine*. Agmon, the great Agmon, towards the end of the Turb†, delivers himself thus: If we had not multiplied the names of the art, and taken pains to obscure it, our scholars had by this time prophaned it, and brought it into contempt. If I, says the illustrious Rafis, was to reveal its mysteries, there would be no longer any difference between the sage and the simple. The Almighty, as Rason writes in the same book, hath obliged the philosophers not to teach this art to the vulgar, lest the world should perish. For this cause the phi-

* See the poem to the introduction, or school of the transmuting metallick philosophy, by David de Planis Campi, p. 1.

† The Turb is a collection of all the visions which they ridiculously ascribe to the ancient philosophers whom they suppose to have been acquainted with the art of making gold, among whom they reckon Aristotle, Socrates, and Pythagoras. In this book also are contained all the follies of the Cabballists. The Turb is in short the Talmud and the Alcoran of the artists, and contains yet more absurd things than those collections of extravagant fables.

losophers have carefully concealed that precious medicine, because it enlivens and conserves all things in an equal temperament. For if all men were alike rich, none would obey others, there would be no longer either rule or order in the world".

" These reasons, continued the Cabbalist, are as you see so essential, that the philosophers are tied down by them not to write but in this obscure manner, and so as only to be understood by such as are initiated in the sacred mysteries. But that which is a farther check, and binds them to a still closer silence, is the barbarous and inhuman treatment such men have met with, as through a fatal easiness have been in this respect guilty of some indiscretion. There are a multitude of tragical histories whence examples of this sort might be drawn. The unfortunate hermit who trusted Braggardin, died by the hand of that robber. Richard the Englishman, who confided his secret to a king of that country, was put to death in the tower. You see then, how much the philosophers are interested in the observation of this rule, of either keeping a profound silence, or speaking in a language intelligible only to their disciples."

To what end then, said I, do you write books upon your art, since they are intelligible only to such as have no need of them, because they already know what they contain. You ought, I think, to avoid publishing books which serve only to make fools of men of avaricious tempers, and to reduce them to an extreme poverty; the just chastisement of their not being content with moderate wealth, sufficient for the supply of their necessities.

" I perceive clearly, said my new master, that you look upon the books of our science to be much more unintelligible than they really are. For you must know, that tho' our writings are very obscure, yet it is not however impossible, through the assistance of God, without which men cannot do any thing, to reach their secret meaning, and to come at the true sense of all their enigmas. It is this that I shall make you clearly apprehend, by giving you the

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key of each different style in which our philosophers write. But in order to make this matter the more easy, I will first discover, without disguise, the fundamental principle of our philosophy."

" When the eternal Being, continued the Cabalist, created the universe, he divided the waters from the waters. He then separated the purer part of these into three portions: Of the first and most perfect part, he made whatsoever exists above the firmament; of the second the firmament itself, the planets, stars, and all that is therein; of the third, he composed the four elements, through which he diffused the spirit of life, which ought to be regarded as a fifth element, the principle, the seed, the ligament, the operating virtue, by which the whole universe is kept together. It is this fifth element, of which the generality of men are ignorant, that the true philosophers call the Universal Spirit, Natural Magick, the Quintessence, the Elixir, Aurum potabile, the Stone, Mercury, Azyth, Water, Fire, Dew, &c. They make use of so many different names, the better to cover their secrets; but, however, it is also true, that each of these different denominations suits perfectly well the thing intended thereby. When they call this the Quintessence, it is because it is the result of the assemblage of the four elements. When they ascribe to it the name of the Elixir, it is on account of its admirable properties in preserving life, and freeing men from all diseases. The title of Aurum potabile is given it, because it is excellent as gold. It must also be observed, that these philosophers do not contradict themselves in asserting that their matter is vegetable, animal, and mineral. For as the universal spirit or fifth element could not subsist without some sort of body; and as, on the other hand, no body can subsist without life, it is diffused through all the different elements; so that the vegetable, the animal, the mineral faculty, are each of them properly ascribed thereto. All the secret of the art then consists in this, the capacity of finding the vital spirit, and putting it into a condition to act freely on any body.

body. For abounding in heat, it clears, purifies, and in the end certainly performs the grand operation".

" The wise philosophers who have written on the method of extracting, or of drawing out of other elements this prolific and vivifying seed, have employed different methods of explication, alike dark and obscure, and these are called the styles. Merlin made use of the allegorick, king Arthur of the parabolick, the great Hermes of problematick, Arsileus of the typical, Balgus and the Cosmopolite of the enigmatical. With respect to these different methods, or, as we phrase it, the interpretation of the styles, the key of the two first will suffice to render the knowledge of the rest easy."

" Merlin, speaking in the allegorick style, proceeds thus: A king having drank of the water could not mount his horse, i. e. by a proper mixture of water and earth, the matter is rendered fluid. He then proceeds; The king having taken a medicine, composed of Sal Armoniack and Nitre, was found dead. By which he would insinuate, that by the means of the specifick projection, or of the spirit extracted from the elements, the liquid matter was fixed and converted into gold, the fire of the furnace having consumed all the humidity,

" The enigmatical style, which is that made use of by Balgus and the Cosmopolite, is as obscure as the allegorick, for those who are unacquainted with this fifth element; this salt or this spirit which I have told you is the true powder of projection. For instance; look, say they, upon an infant that sucks, and be not troubled, for there lies the secret of the art. These words signify, that we must purify the active and the passive matter, the sulphur and the mercury, by a fire that must be managed with care, and which we must augment in the same manner as we encrease

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the portions of aliment given to children as they attain to riper years.

" You now see, continued the Cabbalist, that the writings of the sages are not absolutely unintelligible to such as are initiated in the mysteries of which they treat, and that they have reason to take the precautions they do for the better concealing their secrets from the profane."

I shall readily, returned I, admit of the obscurity for which your philosophers contend, because they say it is so necessary to them. But I have still a great doubt upon me; I can hardly bring myself to believe that any of them have carried matters so far, as actually to extract this vivifying salt from the other elements. I think also that they have never made gold, notwithstanding their boasting of that art. You, for example, who are one of their most famous disciples, do you know the secret of extracting this spirit of life; this powder of projection, which is absolutely necessary to the work of transmutation?

" Such, replied the Cabbalist, as are acquainted with the manner of working, are yet at a great distance from the completion of the great work. One finds not in a whole age above one or two persons fortunate enough to direct their fire with that justice as to arrive at the great end of the art. The smallest excess or deficiency in heat is sufficient to defeat the labour of twenty or of thirty years; and what knowledge soever a man has, it is God alone who can prevent certain accidents which are too frequent for all human precautions; this is the reason why among so many of the sages, so few have fully succeeded *.

* The chymists compare the difficulties attending the search of the philosopher's stone, to those encountered by Jason, in his looking for the Golden Fleece. They pretend, that it is not till after a long and laboured pursuit, that we arrive at length at the great, the important secret. As also, that such as are unable to bear fatigue and disappointments, ought to forbear the search of the philosophick transmutation. This caution is of mighty use in conducting to their utter ruin such as seek to make gold. I must

I must even acknowledge to you, that tho' I have revealed the most hidden mysteries of the art, I would by no means advise you to apply yourself to it; nay, if I had not long ago embraced, I should not at this day have chosen it preferable to many other occupations. I must tell you, that I have already consumed very considerable sums; but tho' I have not reached the art of making gold, I have discovered many other secrets that have recompensed my pains, and encouraged me to pursue my enterprize."

It would then, replied I, be in vain for me to persuade you to quit so deceitful a study. I will not then offer to tell you what you must many times in your cooler moments have told yourself. But I shall at all times be grateful for your complaisance towards me, and shall hear with pleasure whatever you shall think fit further to communicate of your secrets. With these words I took leave of the chymist, who repeated to me his promise of communicating whatsoever he found curious.

How great soever, my dear Isaac, the folly may be of the Cabbalists, and lovers of sublime chymistry, it must however be acknowledged, that the world is much indebted to them for a multitude of discoveries in experimental physicks. For in searching their fifth element, and imaginary powder of projection, they have discovered the methods by which vitriolick and metallick fluids coagulate in the entrails of the earth, and form their minerals, metals, and stones, according to the different kinds of matter on which they act. Chymistry has given us also a sensible idea by its fermentations and sublimations of the vegetation of plants, and the growth of animals. From its distillations we learn how the sun, after having rarified the waters of the sea, or of rivers, draws them into the air, where they form clouds, and again fall down in rain or dew. So many discoveries, for which we are indebted to the studies of the chymists, ought to

to endear to true philosophers the vain researches of the Cabbalists and pretended sages of whose extravagance and folly they make such wise and profitable uses.

Farewell, dear Isaac, live happy and content, and take care not to embarrass yourself by searching after the philosopher's stone.

LETTER CLII.

Some anecdotes relating to the Joan of Arc, commonly call'd the Maid of Orleans; with observations thereon.

AARON MONCECA, to ISAAC ONIS.

London.—

THERE is no nation, dear Isaac, exempt from some false step or other; the French blame the English for having unjustly burnt Joan of Arc, commonly called the Maid of Orleans, for no other crime than that she had faithfully served her prince and country. They say, farther to palliate this injustice done to the illustrious French woman, they have had recourse to fraud and falsehood, and most ridiculously charged her with conjuring and witchcraft.

The English agree at this day, that their ancestors were in the wrong to act so contrary to the laws of equity and of war; they assert, that the Maid of Orleans, whom the French historians, generally speaking, treat as a saint, was in reality no more than a bold, enterprizing, high-spirited woman, of whom the courtiers of Charles VII. made use to re-establish the affairs of the kingdom, and to dispel that panick with which the soldiers had been seized.

This diversity of opinions in the French and English historians begat in me a curiosity of go-

ing to the bottom of this history, and of bringing the truth to light, notwithstanding the mists with which it is covered. Pasquier, an author by no means to be suspected of favouring superstition, hath given us an exact detail of the process against Joan de Arc, whom he looks upon as a saint, and whose memory he has warmly defended. If on examining the proofs which he brings in order to demonstrate the pretended revelation made to this Joan, their falsity can be clearly made appear, one may safely affirm, that Heaven had nothing to do, strictly to say, with the transactions of that woman; and one may allow, that the English at this day are in the right, in alledging she was an instrument made use of by the counsellors and generals of Charles VII. Let me beseech you, my friend, to reflect attentively on the reasons alledged by Pasquier, as those which led him to believe the Maid of Orleans a saint, and I persuade myself that you will quickly see through them.

"It is a great pity, says my author *, never did any person succour France so opportunely and so happily as this maid, and never was the memory of any woman so torn and dishonoured as hers has been. The English looked upon her as a heretick and a witch, in which light they burnt her. Some of our writers have suggested, that she was an artful woman, such a one as Numa Pompilius passed upon the Romans for a nymph, in order to render himself more respected by the people; and this is the opinion of Langy in the third book and third chapter of his Military Discipline. To this others have added, that the French lords engaged this wench to act as she did, and to feign that she was sent by God in order to succour the kingdom; they also affirm, that at Chinon, where the distinguished king Charles amidst the crowd that attended him, she was assisted

* Recherches de Pasquier, lib. vi, cap. 5.

by a certain signal given her by her confederates. Nay, some have been so base and impudent as to suggest that one captain Baudricourt debauched her, and finding her to have a very sharp wit, put her upon this action."

You must observe, Isaac, that even in the time this transaction happened, the truth of her divine mission was very much doubted, and that this opinion spread and prevailed by degrees. In the age wherein Pasquier wrote, most people gave no sort of credit to the holiness of Joan de Arc, or to her wisdom; but on the contrary, were persuaded that all her pretences to inspiration were founded in the secrets revealed to her by Baudricourt.

As to the manners of this young woman, I readily agree with Pasquier, that they were above reproach. The proof he has given us hath the appearance of truth. "Her chastity she maintained, said he, to her death, even in the midst of the troops." It is certain that the English, who sought by a thousand methods to defame her, in order to cover that severity with which they proceeded against her, would not have failed to mention her incontinence, if any testimony thereof had been in their power; and yet there is nothing of this sort in her process. But what of all this? It may prove the chastity indeed, but it cannot prove the sanctity of Joan de Arc. In admitting that Baudricourt did not debauch her, it no way follows that she had a divine revelation; I do not think that being a maid, includes the character of prophetess and deliverer of nations. I shall agree with the French historians, that Joan of Arc never had a bastard; but then I concur with the English authors, in asserting that her pretended mission was a downright imposture. In order to be convinced of this, we need only hear what Pasquier says, who would fain have her canonized: "I shall, says he, run over the principal articles on which Joan of Arc was interrogated. Being asked as to her name, she said, that in her own country she was called Jeanette,

nette, but since she lived in France she had been called Joan of Arc, of the village of Dompre; that her father's name is James Arc, and her mother's Isabella; that the name of one of her godfathers is John Lingue, and of the other John Berry; that one of her godmothers names was Jane, the name of another Agnes, and of another Sibill; and that she had heard her mother say she had some others; that at this time she was about twenty-nine years of age; that she was by profession a sempstress, and not a shepherdess; that she went once a year to confession, and she had frequently heard a voice from Heaven, that it was remarkably clear and strong, and that she took it for the voice of an angel; that it admonished her to go into France, where she should raise the siege of Orleans; and that if she went to captain Robert de Baudricourt, he would grant her an escort to conduct her thither, which accordingly he did."

I fancy, dear Isaac, that if I had not admitted the virginity of our heroine, I might have compared her story to the tale of brother Lucius, which the ingenious La Fontaine hath put into verse. Do not you think that captain Baudricourt acted a little like the hermit in that story, who in a voice like thunder cry'd out, "Good woman, carry your daughter to the servant of God, for between him and her there shall come a child who will one day become a great Pope." I know very well that Baudricourt acted in this case from another motive distinct from brother Lucius; it was policy, and not love that played off this scene. Taken in this light, the maid herself might have been deceived into the part she acted; but her subsequent conduct shews that she was very well acquainted with the design she was to serve, and knew perfectly well how to play her game. She was extremely desirous of passing for a saint and a heroine; and, without all doubt, she acted her part beyond comparison.

I must tell you, my friend, a pleasant notion that is just struck into my head. I think I discover a strong

a strong resemblance between Joan of Arc and La Cadiere ; the one had in view the defeat of the English, and the other of the Jesuits ; both intended to cheat the public and to pass for saints, each of them pretended to a perfect acquaintance with Heaven and with the blessed. As for our maid, she pretended to have revelations from the Deity. For instance, it is said in her proces, " She asserts that she knows God loves the duke of Orleans, and that she had had more revelations in respect to him, than to any other man living, except the person whom she calls her king *."

You see, dear Isaac, that the supreme Being communicated his secrets to this saint, as she said. We shall next see what care was taken to provide faithful messengers ; it was she herself informed her judges of this particular.

" Being interrogated whether she had heard a voice, she answered, yesterday I heard it three times ; first in the morning, then about the time of vespers, and the third time in the night. Being asked if she had ever seen any fairies, she answered, no ; but that a godmother of hers had boasted of seeing them at the fairies tree, in a little copse not far from their village of Dompre.

" Being asked who they were that spoke to her, she answered, St. Catherine and St. Margaret, whom she had often seen and touched, even since her being in prison, and kissed the ground whereon they trod ; that she asked them their advice on each examination, and that she had assumed the habit of a man at their express command."

Was I in the wrong to say that there was great care taken as to the messengers who visited this maid of ours ? Methinks Catherine and Margaret were persons of some distinction. A circumstance

* Item dixit, quod bene scit, quod Deus diligit Duceum Aurelianensem ; ac etiam plures Revelaciones de ipso habuerat, quam de alio homine vivente, excepto illo quem dixit Regem suum.

of this nature would furnish a monkish writer with abundance of fine reflections, if the life of our saint was his theme; he would doubtless observe the great wisdom in sending she, and not he-saints to converse with this holy maid, since she would certainly have been afraid to have staid long alone with a man, or even with the appearance of a man, especially if the saint had been of the order of Cordeliers, and wore the habit: For you are to remark, that these celestial visitors came first to Joan of Arc at a time of life when she might have been very easily frightened; for in one of her answers she says, that at the tree of the fairies, and at a fountain near to Dompre, she had spoke with St. Catherine and St. Margaret, but not to the fairies, and that her first conversation with them was when she was thirteen years old.

Is it lawful, my friend, for an author, who has otherwise a great deal of merit, to attempt to prove the inspiration of the Maid of Orleans, by stories so visibly fabulous as these are? Whenever these answers are mentioned to a philosopher who makes use of his reason, he will not hesitate a moment, let his religion be what it will, in asserting that the whole was a scheme of policy. Ought we to be astonished at the odd things we meet with in Greek and Roman writers, when we see French historians in great esteem boldly tell so puerile a fable as this, and so contrary to common sense? How shall a Christian, who pretends to swallow this tale, give his reasons for rejecting the stories with which the writings of an Herodotus are sprinkled?

To be thoroughly convinced of the absurdity of this pious fraud, we need only consider a little the conduct of this woman while she was in prison. "Being solicited by her judges to put on again the habit of a woman, she said, she desired never to use any female garment, except a shift might be put upon her dead body: And being afterwards told, that she should be admitted to the communion if she would lay aside men's clothes, she took

took it into her head to prefer her breeches to all things, and to chuse rather to live as an excommunicated person than to put on a petticoat." At last, however, she submitted to go to mass in a gown, but upon this express condition, that she might again put on men's clothes when she came from chapel. Was not this a whimsical fancy? *

What is still more extraordinary, it was in complaisance to the orders of St. Catherine and St. Margaret that she was so much attached to her breeches; it is true, she suffered dearly for following their advice. "The prosecutor having finished his evidence, says Pasquier, sentence was pronounced by the bishop: He said, that all that had been done by this woman was to be accounted fiction and delusion, in order to seduce the poor people, or else the invention of the Devil; and that in acting in this manner she had blasphemed against the honour of God, acted undutifully towards her parents, besides shewing herself a very impious person, in declining the holy communion rather than part with the habit of the other sex. There concurred in this judgment the bishops of Constance and Lisieux, the chapter of the cathedral church of Roan, sixteen doctors, six licentiates and batchelors of divinity, and eleven advocates of Roan. This sentence was transmitted to the university of Paris, in order to have their opinion thereupon: The university declared that the maid was truly a heretick and a schismatick, and directed two letters, one to the king, the other to the bishop of Beauvais, desiring she might be put to death."

Notwithstanding the decision of the university, the English were for saving her life, provided always she would consent to quit those cursed breeches, of which she had been hitherto so very fond. The holy

* We are told this in Latin, every way worthy the times wherein the Maid of Orleans suffered as a witch. Noluit huic præcepto obsequi: in quo appetit pervicacia ejus, et obduratio ad malum, et contemptus sacramentorum.

warrour finding at last that die she must, or put on a petticoat, she wisely resolved to make choice of the latter, and this without waiting for the advice of St. Margaret. "They exposed her on a publick scaffold, says Pasquier, where, after she had been admonished, she declared aloud that she submitted to the judgment of God and of our holy father the pope. Then perceiving that they expected still more from her, she professed her unfeigned belief of all that the church taught; and said farther, that since many wise and discreet people were of opinion that the appearances she had seen were not from God, she was content to believe so, and to make a publick abjuration, which is inserted at full length in her proces. Upon this followed another sentence, whereby she is absolved from her excommunication, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment. After this, she resumed the habit of her sex, and was accordingly conducted back to prison."

See, my friend, the maid's affairs now in a pretty tolerable condition, and her life secured at the expence of her breeches. But the mischief was, that she had put on her coats without consulting St. Catherine, who was extremely vexed to find her in a woman's garb; when she came next to make her a visit, she reprimanded her severely. "Who, said she, put you upon changing you garb? Resume, at all events, that which I recommended, and let me see you do it this minute. Joan of Arc obeyed, and very unluckily for her, as the sequel of her story, given us by Pasquier, will shew"

They had however left her men's clothes by her, in order to see what she would do. No sooner was she alone, than, upon second thoughts, she repented of her abjuration, and put on again the clothes she had thrown aside. This abjuration, dear Isaac, in my opinion, resembles strongly that recantation which La Cadiere made of the crimes by her charged upon father Girard; she too, quickly resumed her former sentiments. Joan of Arc did

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the same thing. The one was schooled by the Jansenists, the other by St. Catharine; but Joan paid for it very dearly. Early the next morning she was visited, and being found in her old habit, was asked how she came to make this change; she said, she did it at the command of the saints, and that she was willing rather to obey God than men. On these words she was declared a heretick relapsed, and in consequence thereof delivered over to the secular arm, and condemned to be burnt alive.---- The university of Paris also, willing to play its part, ordered a procession on the feast of St. Martin, whereat a dominican friar made a solemn declamation against this poor wench, in order to shew that whatever she had done was by the assistance of the Devil and not of God.

You see what a noise and disturbance a petticoat and a pair of breeches occasioned, and what a struggle there was which of the two this masculine maid should wear. Surely this appears very ridiculous, and yet if we go to the bottom of things we must acknowledge, that the dress of this wench was a point of state, and a proper subject of refined politics. Those of the French nation required that Joan should not quit her breeches; and, on the other hand, it was requisite for the English that she should appear in petticoats. The reason you'll easily perceive to be very well founded. The astonishing impression which the sanctity of Joan of Arc had made on the minds of the soldiers of Charles VII. had totally ruined the English affairs in France. In order therefore to restore them, and to destroy a notion which was so advantageous to their enemies, it became necessary for them to make the maid disavow all her pretended revelations. The moment she laid aside her breeches their point was gained. On the other hand, Joan of Arc knew perfectly well of how great use her imposture was, and of what mighty consequence her interesting the saints in the affair. This made her remain firm till the fear of an approaching death got the better of her dissimulation.

dissimulation. But being terrified with the fear of punishment, she consented at length to own the falsehood of the tale she had told. When she had once taken this step, the English ought to have rested there, as having effectually destroyed her credit. But it seems they were not of this opinion, they laid therefore a snare for her utter destruction, by leaving her breeches in the way. They might as well have shut up an hungry dog in a chamber full of provisions, and charged him not to eat. The maid being recovered from her first fright, saw the consequence of the false step she had made, and had a mind to repair it. She flattered herself that the English durst not put her to death; but she mistook their tempers.

After all, dear Isaac, tho' I deny the holiness of Joan of Arc, I am far from detracting from the just praises she deserved. She was certainly a heroine, and delivered her country. The cruelty of the English towards her is a stain upon them as a nation. They ought to have look'd upon their prisoner with the respect due to a person faithful to her king and country, and who served them as far as her wit and courage would carry her. If the English had at present such another woman in their hands, they would admire her valour and venerate her person, as much as they would contemn her pretences to saintship.

Adieu, dear Isaac, live content and happy, and let me have the satisfaction of hearing from you.

LETTER

LETTER CLIII.

Critical observations on Mr. Locke's sentiments, concerning the inactivity of the soul while we are asleep; in which Moncea indeavours to prove, that Locke had made too hasty a conclusion on that subject.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

London—

AS much as I am prejudiced in favour of Mr. Locke's sentiments, I can scarce grant him that the soul sometimes ceases totally to think, that is, while we are asleep.

I do admit that I am not thoroughly satisfied that this opinion is absolutely false, but I look upon it as doubtful, and therefore I should have been glad he had laid down his notion as probable only, and not as certain. This sage philosopher seems to me too much persuaded that the Cartesians are mistaken in their definition of the essence of the soul, when they assure us that it consists in actual thought. "We know," says he, certainly, by experience, that sometimes we think, and hence we deduce this infallible conclusion, that we have in us something which hath a power of thinking: But to know whether this substance thinks continually or not, is what we cannot be assured of, farther than experience informs us. For to say that actual thinking is an essential property of the soul, is visibly to beg the question, without any kind of proof*."

I am of opinion, my friend, that Locke had no just reason for this reproach on the Cartesians, because there are several strong reasons which seem to authorize this definition, that the essence of the soul consists in the actual faculty of thinking. "The soul,

* Locke's Essay on Human Understanding. Book II. Chap. i. sec. 10. All the quotations are in this chapter.

say

say the philosophers, hath neither magnitude, extent nor depth. Thus then, none of those attributes which belong to matter can be assigned thereto. We know then but one of its qualities, viz. that of thinking. Have we not reason then to alledge that it cannot subsist without this, and that it is its essence, because it is the only quality which we have discovered. For, as we are acquainted with the existence of matter only by the means of its extension, so all the knowledge we have of souls is by thought. Inasmuch as we hesitate not to define the essence of matter by extension, on account of our knowing no material substance but what is extended, why should we not define the essence of the soul by the actual exercise of thought, since we cannot perceive a spiritual substance but what has this faculty of thinking."

Tho' it may be possible to answer these objections, or at least to shew that they are not convincing, it must however be acknowledged that they ought to be thoroughly examined, and that they very well deserve our attention: The Cartesians are far from asserting that the soul always thinks, without proofs. Locke therefore had no right to reproach these philosophers for advancing, without evidence and against reason, a question with respect to fact, and that there was nothing but might be proved, according to their method. "I need only suppose," said he, "that all watches think while the balance is in motion, and I shall have thereby sufficiently prov'd that my watch thought all last night long." But the Cartesians might say, you have no right to say that your watch thinks while the balance moves, because you have not only no probable reason to assert that the motion of a balance hath any thing to do with thought, but you are, on the other hand, fully assured that inasmuch as it is a material substance, it has no other qualities than those of extent, quantity and thickness. But with respect to us, the case is very different. We say that the soul thinks as well when we are asleep as when we are awake, because we were sure that the faculty of thinking belongs thereto, not only when

the body is awake, but asleep, of which the remembrance of our dreams is a certain and evident proof. We therefore have some foundation to conclude, that it may do continually what it does for some moments; whereas your supposition of the balance and the watch is absurd and ridiculous."

I will continue, dear Isaac, my examination of Locke's sentiments, and I beseech you to give me your opinion of the difficulties which appear in them to me. "The first time we fall fast asleep," says that philosopher, "I apprehend we shall be sufficiently satisfied that there is nothing in their doctrine, who teach that the soul always thinks. At least those who have slept without dreaming can never be convinced that their thoughts were in action, during the space of four hours, while they knew nothing of the matter; and if they are taken in the very act, waked in the middle of that sleeping contemplation, can give no manner of account of it. It will perhaps be said, that the soul thinks, even in the soundest sleep, but the memory retains it not: That the soul, in this sleeping man, should be this moment busy a thinking; and the next moment, in a waking man, not remember, or be able to recollect one jot of all those thoughts, is very hard to be conceived, and would need some better proof than bare assertion to make it be believed."

The Cartesians might reply to these objections, that far from resting their notions on the assurance they give us of their justice and truth, they rely on daily experience for the proof of their opinions. For in fact, does it not seem an odd thing to be amazed that a man, waking on a sudden, should lose in an instant, the thoughts which occupied him while he slept; whereas we daily see men in their full senses, and broad awake, forgetting one minute what they thought on a minute before, and striving to no purpose, to recover their first thought? There is not a man in this world to whom these slips do not sometimes happen; and there is nothing more common than to hear a man say, I had this minute something

to tell you, it has escaped me, I have done all I can to recollect it, but I find it is absolutely in vain. I would ask, my dear Isaac, if the soul, forgetting totally certain thoughts which occupied it a moment before, while the body it occupies is wide awake, we ought to think it extraordinary that it loses the remembrance of those thoughts which employed it while the body was asleep, of which consequently it could have but light impressions, its organs being, in a manner, stopt up and able to serve it but faintly. Shall we say that it is not impossible that the soul may rest for a moment, that is, cease from thinking, even when a man is awake; and that his forgetting its perceptions is owing to this short and imperceptible cessation of thought? This would be an absurdity so great and so evident, that experience alone would sufficiently detect it. The sage Locke was too quick-sighted to adopt such an opinion. He says on the contrary, "That it is admitted the soul never ceases to think while a man is awake, because this is precisely what, in this respect, constitutes his condition." Who then can shew us a reason for a man's forgetting his own thoughts while he is awake? Let us, I say, see him who will answer this question, and he will have a right to oblige the Cartesians, in their turn, to explain how a man may think all night without knowing, the next morning, any thing of the ideas which occupied his mind for so many hours.

The difficulty which Locke proposes, as to the inutility of the soul's thinking during the time of sleep, does not appear to me very considerable. "To think often, says he, and never to retain it, so much as one moment, is a very useless sort of thinking, and the soul in such a state of thinking does very little, if at all, excel that of a looking-glass, which constantly receives variety of images or ideas, but retains none; they disappear and vanish, and there appears no foot-steps of them; the looking glass is never the better for such ideas, nor the soul for such thoughts.—If the soul retains no memory of its own thoughts,

if it cannot lay them up for its use, and be able to recall them upon occasion; if it cannot reflect upon what is past and make use of its former experiences, reasonings and contemplations, to what purpose does it think? They who make the soul a thinking thing, at this rate will not make it a more noble being than those do whom they condemn for allowing it to be nothing but the subtlest parts of matter.—Nature never makes excellent things for mean or no uses: and it is hardly to be conceived, that our infinitely wise creator should make so admirable a faculty as the power of thinking, to be so idly employed, at least a quarter part of its time, as to think constantly without rememb'ring any of its parts."

This passage, my dear Isaac, contains two objections. The first respects the inutility of thoughts to a man asleep. But to this the Cartesians may well reply to Locke, that those thoughts which he looks upon as superfluous may be very necessary, tho' we are not acquainted with their use: Because 'tis too hasty a conclusion, that, in consequence of our not knowing what use a thing is for, therefore it ought not to be. The weakness of human understanding hinders it from penetrating the use of a multitude of beings, which exist notwithstanding; nor have we any right to deny their existence. Besides, experience inclines us to believe that men really reap profit from the thoughts which their souls have in sleep, tho' they are not communicated to the body. The translator of Locke remarks very justly, that the inutility of these kind of thoughts is not so certain as our author imagines. "A child, says he, is obliged to get by heart a dozen or fifteen verses out of Virgil: He reads them three or four times just before he is going to sleep, and repeats them as soon as he awakes in the morning, perfectly well. Does his soul think of these verses while he is buried in a profound sleep? The child knows nothing of the matter. However, if the soul actually ruminated on the verses, as I think I may suspect, with some appearance of reason,

then there are certain thoughts not altogether useless for man, tho' he has no sort of remembrance that his soul was employed about them so much as one moment*."

The second objection of Locke falls of itself. For when we have destroyed the first, and have proved that the thoughts of a man asleep may be useful to him tho' he cannot remember that he thought, it can no longer be said that nature does nothing in vain, and that God, acting always with infinite wisdom, bestows not superfluous faculties on any being. In order to have made his reasons clear and conclusive, it ought to have been evidently and unanswerably proved, that the thoughts of a man asleep are absolutely useless; and even after that there would remain a difficulty to be resolved. " Of what use, might one say to Mr. Locke, are dreams? Are they very useful or necessary to men, or do they draw any great advantage from the dark remembrance of certain whimsical ideas presented to their imaginations? Here are thoughts that are little better than useless, and yet occupy the human soul while the body is asleep. God therefore may have afforded man a faculty of forming other thoughts, of which he entirely loses all remembrance.

Fare thee well, dear Isaac, live content and happy.

* Remarque a la Page 73. de la 2d Edition. i. e. of P. Coste's Translation of Locke's Essay on Human Understanding.

LETTER CLIV.

Isaac Onis's thoughts on the subject of the foregoing letter.—He espouses the sentiments of Locke, with regard to the soul's ceasing to think during sleep, in opposition to the Cartesians.

ISAAC ONIS, to AARON MONCECA.

Lisbon.—

I Have examined, with all imaginable attention the letter you wrote me concerning the difficulties you find in that opinion, which will not admit actual thinking to be the essence of the soul. After comparing your objections with what Locke hath written on the subject, I am thoroughly persuaded that it was on a good foundation this sage philosopher maintained that there is an appearance of the soul's resting, during considerable intervals, without thinking.

The comparison you make between extension as the essence of matter, and the actual exercise of thought, as the essence of the soul, doth not appear to me either just or conclusive. I could farther deny that extension is the essence of matter, and could alledge that you are so far from knowing what constitutes a spiritual substance, that you are ignorant even of the first principles of material things. "Des Cartes, says a modern philosopher, * makes the essence of a body consist in extension, and concludes that there is extension wherever there is matter.—I ask then what reason there is that extension should constitute the nature and essence of a body rather than solidity, or any other essential quality of matter. For by this attention to a single attribute abstracted

* Philosophie du Bon Sens, ou Reflexions Philosophiques à l'Usage des Cavaliers et du Beau Sexe, p. 278. That is, the Philosophy of Good Sense, or philosophical reflections for the use of gentlemen and ladies. By the Marquis d'Argens, the author of this book.

from all the rest, we are given to understand that the other qualities may subsist without it, which is contrary however to their nature. I may single out any particular attribute, stop there, and suppose it to constitute the essence of body. If I hold in my hand a sphere, I may, by abstraction, suppose that all its weight is in its centre, and attend only to this idea of its centre. It would however be absurd for me to conclude that the nature and essence of body consists in gravity only. Besides, we do not know all that is in this body, at least, we cannot demonstrate these notions of ours. Therefore we do not certainly know how it is constituted; and tho' we perceive not above seven or eight attributes, yet can we not assure ourselves that it hath none others, without which its existence would be as impossible as without those seven or eight which are known to us. If the nature of a thing consists of thirty attributes necessary and inseparable, and ten of these should be taken away, it would be ridiculous in us to suppose we still had that thing which absolutely required thirty. On the contrary, we have another thing which absolutely requires a lesser number of attributes from its existence. It is the same thing with respect to body; of which, as we cannot demonstrate that we know all its attributes, it is also impossible that we should precisely know what constitutes its essence."

You see then, Monocca, that there are very strong reasons against the pretended certainty of the Cartesians, with respect to the essence of matter. Now if it be true that men are uncertain as to the nature of bodies, why should they flatter themselves that they have clear and distinct notions of the nature of the soul? Might not Locke very well say to the Cartesians, Before you persuade yourselves that you ought to define the essence of matter by extension, and that of the soul by actual thought, because you cannot imagine any corporeal thing without extension, or any spiritual being without the faculty of thinking; stay till you are clearly informed as to all the different attributes which are absolutely necessary to these

different

different substances, that you may not allow a single attribute to be the essence of a thing, which it may be requires thirty, of which you are ignorant, and yet nevertheless, they are absolutely necessary as to its existence. You believe, or at least you would persuade others that you believe that you are certain, in the notions you have of the essence of spiritual and material beings; yet one may very reasonably say that you are so far from knowing the nature of these substances, that you are absolutely ignorant wherein consists the difference between them.

I don't know, my friend, whether ever you have taken notice of what Locke wisely objects to the Cartesians, on the subject of man's ignorance as to the essence of the human soul. "We have, says he, "the ideas of matter and thinking, but possibly "shall never be able to know whether any mere "material being thinks or no, it being impossible "for us, by the contemplation of our own ideas, "without revelation, to discover whether Omnipotence has not given to some systems of matter fitly disposed, a power to perceive and think; or else joined and fixed to matter so disposed a thinking immaterial substance; it being in respect of our notions, not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive that God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a faculty of thinking, than that he should superadd to matter a faculty of thinking, than that he should superadd to it another substance with a faculty of thinking—For since we must allow God has annexed effects to motion which we can no way conceive motion able to produce, what reason have we to conclude that he could not order them, as well to be produced in a subject we cannot conceive capable of them, as well as in a subject we cannot conceive the motion of matter can any way operate upon?"

Before it is defined that the soul always thinks, and that it is contrary to its essence to remain sometimes altogether unactive while the body sleeps, the Cartesians ought to shew us, not only full answers

to

to Locke's objections, but also that we are under no kind of uncertainty as to the nature of the soul. If they cannot demonstratively prove that it is not material, which they cannot do, because they are ignorant of its nature, what do they mean by defining its essence, and founding all their reasonings upon that rash definition? Dr. Stillingfleet would have persuaded Locke, that the necessity of the soul's being spiritual might be demonstrated, and that the giving to matter a power of thinking was impossible even to God. To the old reasons of the Cartesians, he added some new ones. You may find a clear detail of this whole dispute in the notes to the Essay on Human Understanding. The English philosopher says to his adversary, " Our idea of " matter in general being a solid substance, and our " idea of a body a solid, extended, figured substance; " you pretend, if I admit matter to be capable of " thinking, I confound the idea of matter with the " idea of a spirit; to which I answer, no, no more " than I confound the idea of matter with the idea " of a horse, when I say, that matter in general is " a solid extended substance, and that a horse is a " material animal, or an extended solid substance " with sense and spontaneous motion. The idea " of matter is an extended solid substance; where- " ever there is such a substance there is matter, and " the essence of matter, whatever other qualities, " not contained in that substance, it shall please God " to superadd to it. For example, God creates an ex- " tended solid substance, without the superadding " any thing else to it; and so we may consider it " at rest: to some parts of it he superadds motion, " but it has still the essence of matter; other parts " of it he frames into plants, with all the excellencies " of vegetation, life, and beauty, which is to be " found in a rose, or a peach-tree, above the essence " of matter in general; but it is still matter: to " other parts, he adds sense and spontaneous motion " and those other properties that are to be found in

" an

" an elephant. All this is allow'd; but if one
" ventures to go a step farther, and say, God may
" give to matter, thought, reason, and the power
" of willing, as well as sense and spontaneous motion,
" there are men ready presently to limit the power
" of the omnipotent creator.*" To these objections,
dear Monceca, Dr. Stillingfleet could oppose
nothing that was reasonable. He had recourse to
general terms, which had been ever and ever ex-
amined, and invincibly refuted. Let us acknow-
ledge then frankly, that we know nothing of the
soul. We know that in men awake it always thinks,
but whether it hath any perceptions while we are
asleep, is a thing we never can be clear in.

As to what you say of the sudden loss of thought
which men daily perceive when they are awake, it
can, by no means, be compared with those into
which the soul falls, in case it were certain it thought
while we slept. For a man awake, who forgets
something which was in his head a moment before,
remembers he thought, though he cannot recollect
of what, because his mind is distracted by other
ideas; he retains, however, a certain conviction and
perfect remembrance that he had some perceptions,
whereas a man who has slept all night, wakes the
next morning without knowing that his mind per-
ceived any idea whatsoever. One ought to regard
such slips in a man, who is awake, as the con-
sequence of a continual circulation of ideas. It
is not reasonable therefore, to explain after this
manner, that ignorance in which the soul appears
to be on the waking of the body, as to all the fine
thoughts with which he is supposed to have been
occupied. Had not then Locke reason to say, "wake
a man out of a deep sleep, and ask him what he was
thinking of." If he knew not that he had been thinking
he must be a very extraordinary person to assert that
he never ceased to think. Might not one with more
reason affirm that he had not slept? This is beyond

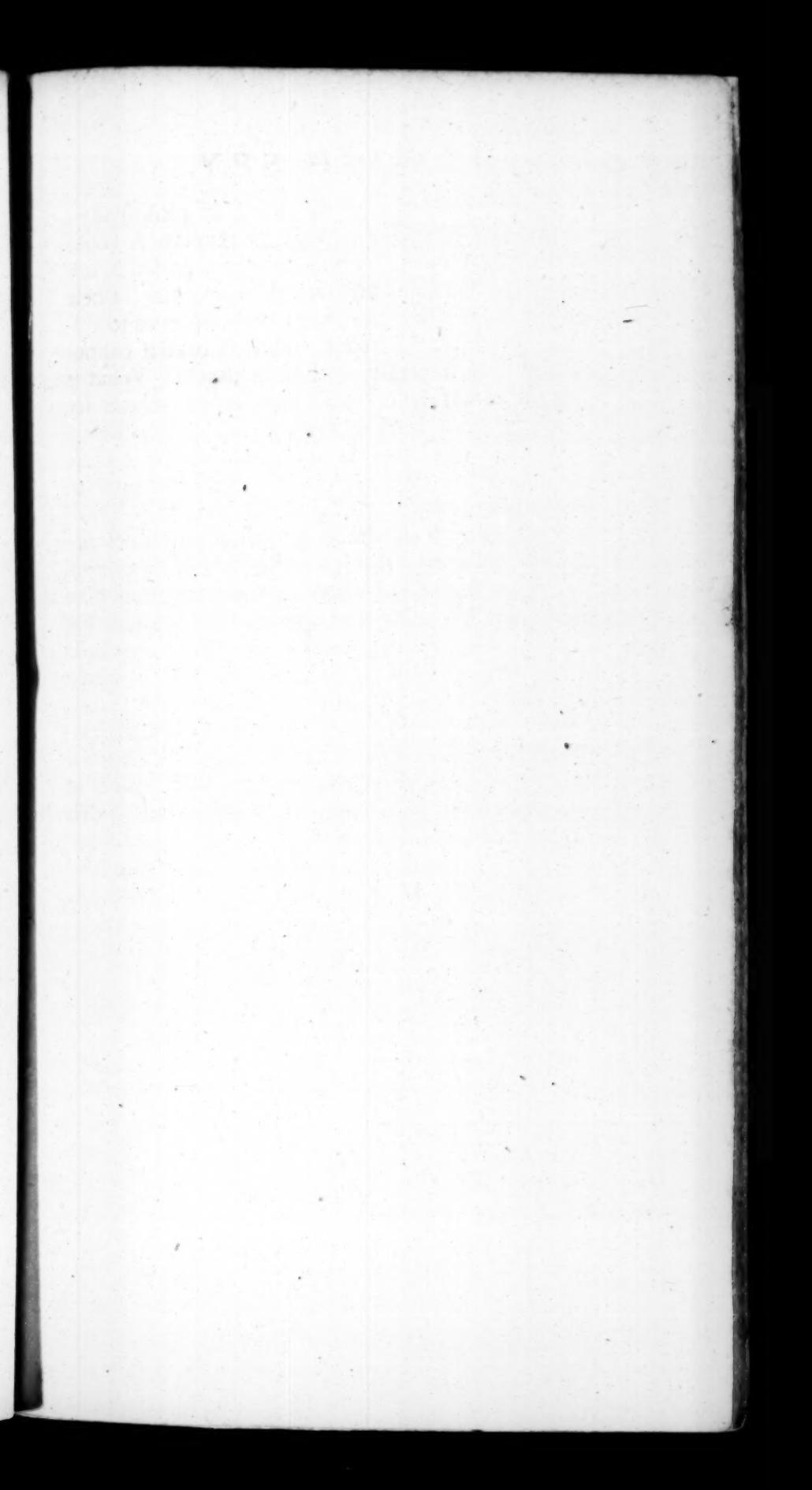
* Locke's Essay on Human Understanding, book IV chap. iii.
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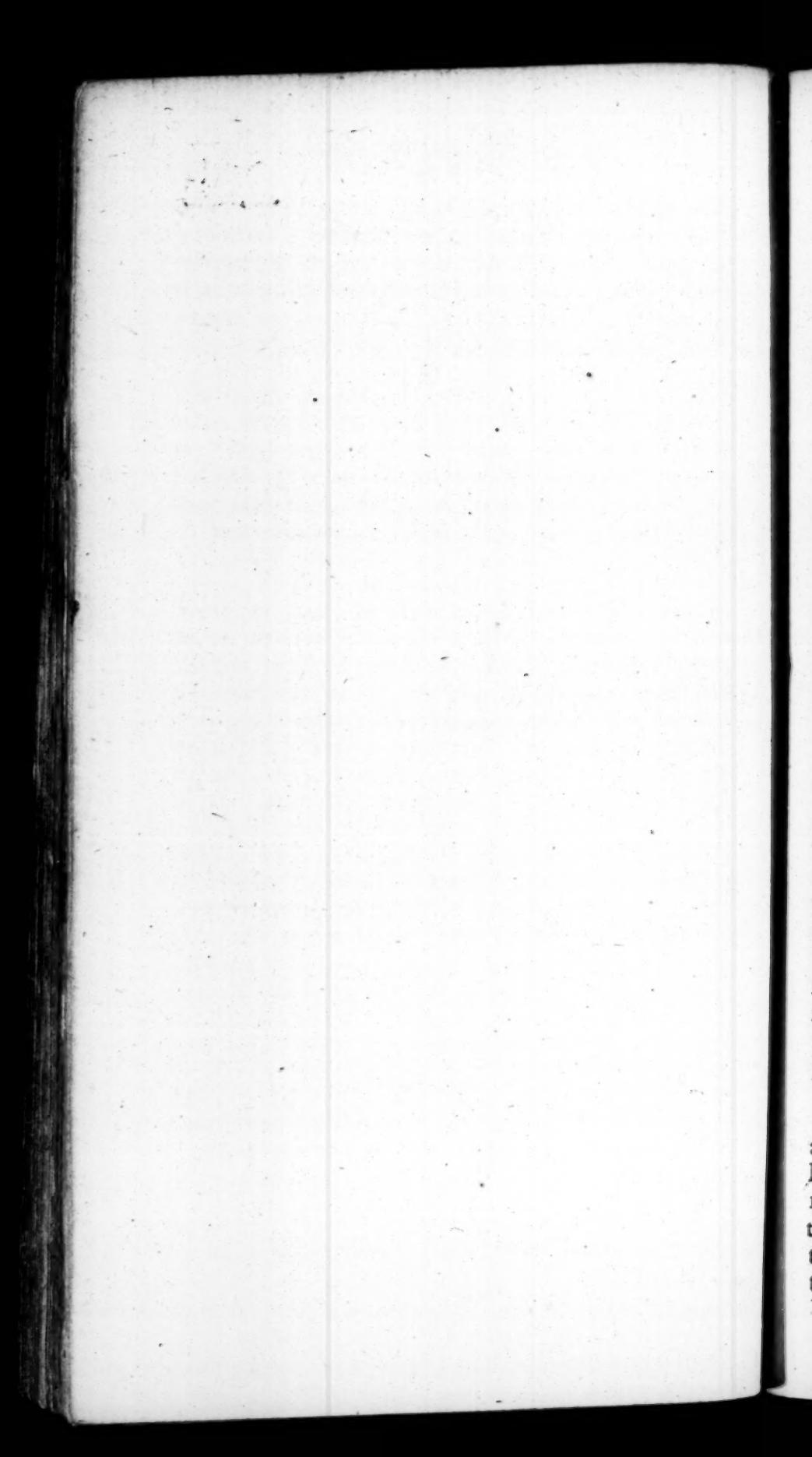
all doubt, a matter out of the reach of philosophy; and there is nothing but an express revelation could discover to another that certain thoughts passed in my soul, though I did not discover them myself. These people must certainly have very piercing eyes to discern certainly that I think, while I myself cannot perceive it, and expressly declare as much. What is still more remarkable, these same eyes, which see more in me than I see in myself, can also perceive that dogs and elephants do not think, though these animals give us all imaginable demonstrations of their thinking, except telling us as much.

As to dreams, dear Moncea, which you fancy favour your sentiment, take care that it does not overturn it, for it seems that they are evident proofs that when the soul does think in our sleep we are sensible of it; and that it cannot think at all, but the whole human machine must be sensible thereof. I agree with you as to the inutility of dreams, but then they are occasioned by second causes: They are occasion'd by certain motions in the brain during our sleep. Their inutility therefore cannot excuse that of the pretended power of thinking in the soul, which it must derive immediately from God, since it cannot be produced by any passions of the body, otherwise it would have knowledge of them, as this sensibility in dreams clearly proves. Locke then had reason to say that nature makes nothing in vain, and that it is by no means likely that the soul should have a faculty of employing itself about useless thoughts while the body is asleep. Read over again with attention, dear Moncea, all that Locke has said in support of his sentiment, and I am persuaded you will never more accuse him of being too decisive.

Adieu my friend, live content and happy.

The End of the Third Volume.





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